W.I.L.D.
About Denali

*Wilderness* Intensive Learning Development

Partnering with our community to serve all Alaskans, and provide experiences only possible in Denali.

The mission of the Denali Education Center is to promote understanding and appreciation of Denali through informative and inspiring programs.
What is *W.I.L.D. about Denali*?

In the nearly 20 years that *W.I.L.D. about Denali* has been in existence, one thing has been overwhelmingly shared by participants on why they want to return: because it’s fun!

When asked, our partner agencies’ staff members have consistently described *W.I.L.D.* as an organized and flexible program that inspires independence, teamwork, and educational experiences only possible in Denali.

*W.I.L.D. about Denali* is a program designed to serve all Alaskans. It is the only program in Alaska that provides National Park access and transformational wilderness experiences to underserved and vulnerable populations. Our partnerships with Alaskan social service agencies that benefit at-risk youth and people living with disability has ensured that *W.I.L.D.* can continue to serve and benefit those seeking independence and new opportunities for personal growth.

During this program, participants engage in activities that expand independent living skills and strengthen notions of teamwork through wilderness experiences in Denali National Park and Preserve. We currently offer two program options. Our introductory *W.I.L.D.* option is organized as a three-day, two-night camping trip at Savage Campground and involves interpretive hikes focusing on local ecology and wilderness stewardship; camp activities centered around creating a supportive group dynamic and building new skills; and an exciting whitewater rafting trip on the Nenana River.

For those who have participated in a Savage *W.I.L.D.* program and want to have a deeper wilderness experience, there is *W.I.L.D. Wonder Lake*. Participants travel on a Camper Bus to Wonder Lake, 90 miles inside the park, and stay at the Wonder Lake Campground for three nights. With the added challenge of being in a remote wilderness setting, *W.I.L.D. Wonder Lake* further enriches skills learned in prior programs and deepens participant’s understanding of Denali as a protected place.

Who are the *W.I.L.D.* partners?

Denali Education Center, Denali National Park and Preserve, Denali Outdoor Center, Old Sourdough Studios, Challenge Alaska, and Family Centered Services of Alaska.

Program Mission

To provide all Alaskans with quality opportunities to enhance understandings of health, independence, and teamwork through experiences in the wilderness of Denali National Park and Preserve.

Goals

- **Health through Wilderness**- Physical and emotional health is enriched through wilderness experiences and transfers as respect for oneself, others, and the environment.
- **Independence through Learning**- Independence is enhanced through learning basic outdoor skills and expands into universal self-efficacy.
- **Teamwork through Challenge**- Teamwork is strengthened by recognizing and persevering through challenges and develops into group empowerment.
- **Growth through Denali**- Personal growth is accelerated through a discovery of Denali’s Wilderness and expands into self-actualization.
Who is eligible for the W.I.L.D. program?

Denali Education Center partners with social service agencies and other organizations throughout Alaska that seek to empower individuals through wilderness experiences. Each partner agency is responsible to determine which clients are eligible for the W.I.L.D. experience according to the agencies’ own guidelines.

What do partner agencies provide?

- Transportation for all participants to and from Denali and at all times throughout the program.
- Staffing: Two or more counselors per group based on a maximum of twelve participants.
- Personal camping gear: sleeping bags, sleeping pads, clothing and extra shoes, day pack, reusable water bottle etc. Denali Education Center has a limited number of sleeping bags and pads to supplement those who do not have personal gear.

What does the Denali Education Center provide?

- Staffing: One leader per group. An additional counselor may be available by special arrangement.
- Food for the entire group.
- Campground reservations for the group.
- Group rafting trip on the Nenana River (weather permitting).
- Group camping equipment: tents, stoves, cooking gear, etc.
- Group rafting photo provided by Old Sourdough Studio.

What is the cost per participant?

**Savage River W.I.L.D.**
$300/participant, $225/agency staff

**Wonder Lake W.I.L.D.**
$350/participant, $275/agency staff

For those fundraising for their participant fee, we offer scholarships through the [Maureen Sims Memorial Endowment](#) and [Creekside Cabins and Café WILD Fund](#) annually.

Program Deposit and Cancellation Policy:

Denali Education Center requires a refundable program deposit of **$600**. This deposit is due at the time of registration; the remaining balance is due upon arrival.

The deposit is necessary to cover costs that are incurred in preparation for each trip. It is for these reasons and others that we require a deposit and have implemented the following cancellation policy:

- Cancel up to 4 weeks prior to start date............... Full refund (of program deposit)
- Cancel up to 3 weeks prior to start date...............75% refund
- Cancel up to 2 weeks prior to start date...............50% refund
- Cancellations that occur within two weeks of the program will receive no refund.
Denali Education Center Staff Role

Our role is to engage participants with the wilderness of Denali through positive learning experiences. Denali Education Center field staff members coordinate the program logistics, and facilitate hiking and campout activities in a manner that encourages teamwork and independence.

Primary responsibilities of Denali Education Center Staff include:
- Manage camp setup and breakdown
- Instruct cooking and meal time preparations
- Coordinate the logistics of daily activities
- Lead interpretive hikes
- Facilitate in-camp and on-trail activities

Agency Staff Role

Because the primary role of the Denali Education Center staff is to coordinate logistics, and guide the hiking and campout aspects of the program, it is the role of the agency staff to manage participants’ interactions and contribute towards encouraging a positive experience for all. All agency staff accompanying participants on a W.I.L.D. trip are expected to manage and encourage appropriate behavior in this group-oriented scenario. While Denali Education Center staff members are trained and adept in industry-standard conflict resolution and behavior management practices, they do not know the participants’ specific challenges or behavioral norms; the DEC expects agency staff to be experts in this field and to provide professional intervention when necessary.

Primary expectations for agency staff:
- Supervise participants at all times, including bathroom trips, filling water jugs, etc. All participants must be in sight and sound distance.
- Manage discipline and behavior of participants.
- Assist in motivating the participants to help with camp chores (meal preparations, camp setup and breakdown, dishwashing, etc.).

2018 Program Dates

Wonder Lake Campground
- July 30-August 3
- August 20-24

Savage Campground
- August 27-30

How to make a reservation

Please contact Patrick Kelly, Youth Programs Manager:

907-683-2597
youth@denali.org

WILD about Denali
A poem by former participant Samuel Kuchin-Branch, age 17

Childhood Couldn't
Be understood
Denali made it happen
W.I.L.D made it work
A truer belief
Doesn't exist
Because
Denali created bliss
W.I.L.D grew that
Now older than before
Wiser than before
I now owe thanks to Denali
A home in my home
And to my friends
The WILD
Sample Itineraries
W.I.L.D. about Denali

Denali Education Center is flexible and interested in working with agencies to construct appropriate and relevant itineraries that address the agency's specific needs. All itineraries assume an added Monday commute day.

Note: The following sample itineraries are based on previous trips with groups of 6 participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location: Wonder Lake Campground</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30 pm Group meets at DEC Sheldon Center for orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:05 pm Depart from Riley Creek for Wonder Lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:15 pm Arrive at Wonder Lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 pm Set up camp &amp; dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00 am Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 am Hike Quigley Ridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30 pm Lunch on the Trail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00 pm Afternoon Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30 pm Dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 pm Group games or Ranger presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 am Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 am Morning activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 pm Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 pm Hike on McKinley Bar Trail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30 pm Dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 pm Ranger presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 am Depart Wonder Lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:50 pm Arrive at Denali Visitor Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:15 pm Clean up at Denali Education Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:00 pm Closing Circle and Departure</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location: Savage River Campground</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30 pm Group arrives at Savage Campground for orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00 pm Set up tents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00 pm Hike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 pm Dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00 pm Group games or Ranger presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 am Wake up, eat breakfast &amp; pack lunches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 am Hike Horseshoe Lake or Mt. Healy Overlook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:45 pm Lunch at Riley Creek Mercantile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00 pm Drive to Denali Outdoor Center for rafting</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:30 pm Raft take-out</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:00 pm Watch movie at Visitor's Center, back to campground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 pm Dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00 pm Group games or presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 am Wake up, eat breakfast, &amp; pack lunches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 am Break camp and pack van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45 am Visit Park Sled Dog Kennels</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30 am Gear clean-up at Denali Education Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:00 pm Closing Circle and Goodbyes</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:15 pm Depart with lunches</td>
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Our Mission: To promote understanding and appreciation of Denali through informative and inspiring programs.

Current Program Offerings:

Tundra Tots: What could be more exciting than watching young minds discover the world around them! Tundra Tots is a toddler and preschool program that employs storytelling, play, and art to provide meaningful outdoor experiences for the whole family. The Tundra Tots program is designed for toddlers/preschoolers age two to five.

Denali Discovery Camp: Partnering with the National Park Service through the Murie Science and Learning Center and the Denali Borough community, this weeklong day-camp for first through eighth-graders provides an opportunity to discover Denali’s important and diverse ecosystems. Days filled with excursions to different locations within the park connect this vast wilderness and its future caretakers. Over 30 kids participate in Denali Discovery Camp each summer.

Denali Backcountry Adventures: Designed specifically for high school students, this expedition-style backpacking program is a follow-up to Denali Discovery Camp. Denali Backcountry Adventures (DBA) is a 5-day expedition during which participants learn experientially about the physical and mental preparations required to launch a backcountry expedition. The program offers the opportunity to develop awareness, knowledge, and skills that increase the students’ understanding and enjoyment of Denali.

Learning Vacations: An adventure in lifelong learning for school groups, conservation organizations, alumni travels groups, and affinity groups. A variety of programs throughout the year bring people together from around the world to study Denali’s wildlife and natural history while exploring the balance between preservation and use in this unique subarctic wilderness. Denali Education Center’s Learning Vacation programs reach up to 800 people each summer.

Denali Community Series: An open forum for cultural and natural history, current research, community interest, classes, art, and music. Events are hosted throughout the summer in the Charles Sheldon Center and at the McKinley Park Community Center during the winter months. This popular series serves approximately 5000 people each year. Current events can be found on our online Community Calendar.

Welcome to the Subarctic: This hour-long presentation helps prepare those who are traveling into Denali National Park and Preserve by introducing Denali’s unique subarctic ecosystem. Topics include subarctic ecology, plant and animal adaptations, and Denali National Park history.

Life in Denali: Have you ever wondered what it takes to live in the subarctic year-round? This hour-long presentation by a Denali resident will explore the seasons through personal stories and photos answering questions about what life is like, what people do, how they do it, and why they stay. Hear about surviving winter darkness, layering for extreme temperatures, living with wildlife, outhouse etiquette, and other everyday adventures in the far north.
Organization History:

Denali Education Center, formerly Denali Foundation, was established in 1989 by the Denali Park Concessionaire and Denali National Park and Preserve Superintendent. The original vision for the organization was to serve as a research facility for biologists studying Denali’s unique ecosystem. Through the education and communication programs of the organization, researchers would share their expertise with other professionals, park visitors, and the local community. This vision helped fill the communication gap between biologists, resource managers, and the public. In November 1989, the Denali Foundation was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

Throughout the 1990s, the Denali Foundation offered educational travel programs for visitors to Denali. These group programs brought people from all over the country to Denali National Park for six nights to study wildlife, natural history, and the intricate balance between preservation and use. A week-long intensive study in Denali was (and remains) an incredibly unique experience in a tourist area where most visitors stay only one or two nights. The program created ambassadors for Denali. As the need for education about wilderness and protected places became apparent, the Denali Foundation adopted it as the focus of the organization.

Today we serve our original purpose and an expanded education-centered mission. In 2007, we changed our name to Denali Education Center and our mission became to promote understanding and appreciation of Denali through informative and inspiring programs. Over the last 26 years, we have diversified our program offerings in an effort to reach program participants of all ages. Our goal is to help all visitors experience the mountains, forests, rivers, wildlife, and people of Denali.

Denali Education Center Staff:

Executive Director  Jodi Rodwell  
Operations Director  Jill Boelsma  
Program Director  Hannah Noel  
Residential Program Manager  Jake Hill  
Youth Programs Manager  Patrick Kelly  

Denali Education Center Board of Directors:

Chair  Greg LaHaie, Owner, Kantishna Air Taxi, Denali Park, AK  
Vice Chair  Thom McAleer, General Manager, Alaska Denali Travel, Anchorage, AK  
Eric Filardi, High School Teacher, Nenana City Public School, Nenana, AK  
Brent Fisher, President, Board Advisor Firm, Anchorage, AK  
Jersey Jones, Sales and Marketing, Specialty Imports, Fairbanks, AK  
Michael Kaplan, PhD, Associate Professor, Alaska Pacific University, Anchorage, AK  
Scott Kiersztyn, Instructor, Tahoma Audubon, Tahoma, WA  
Tennelle Peterson, General Manager, Denali Bluffs Hotel, Denali Park, AK  
Blair Schoenborn, Senior Analyst, Corporate Social Responsibility at BNY Mellon, Pittsburgh, PA  
Bonnie Westlund, General Manager, Denali Princess Lodge, Denali Park, AK