

# Trails

## Turnagain Arm Trail 1

**Access:** Potter, McHugh Creek, Rainbow, and Windy Corner trailheads  
**Travel Means:** Foot  
**Distance:** 9.5 miles one way (Potter-McHugh: 3.4 miles, McHugh-Rainbow: 4.2 miles, Rainbow-Windy: 1.9 miles)  
**Elevation Gain:** 200-1,000 feet

Following a support route created during the 1910s to aid construction of the Alaska Railroad, this trail meanders above the Seward Highway and offers sweeping views of Turnagain Arm. Thanks to its southern exposure, this is one of the first snow-free trails in the spring.

## McHugh & Rabbit Lakes Trail 2

**Access:** McHugh Creek Trailhead (MP 112)  
**Travel Means:** Foot  
**Distance:** 6.4 miles one way to Rabbit Lake  
**Elevation Gain:** 2,900 feet

This trail travels through cottonwood and aspen trees and alpine tundra. The area around Rabbit Lake offers secluded backcountry camping and is a perfect base camp for a weekend adventure. Ground fires are prohibited—bring a campstove.

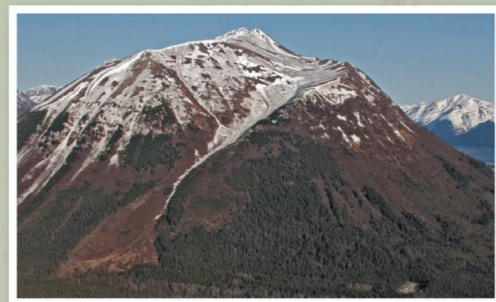


Photos of Rabbit Lake (above) and McHugh Creek Falls (right), courtesy of Frank Kovalchek

## Falls Creek Trail 3

**Access:** Falls Creek Trailhead (MP 105.6)  
**Travel Means:** Foot  
**Distance:** 2.7 miles one way  
**Elevation Gain:** 2,900 feet

This steep climb traces tumbling Falls Creek through the woods and ends near a small lake at the head of a wide alpine valley. For experienced scramblers, Falls Creek Trailhead also offers access to South Suicide Peak overlooking McHugh and Rabbit lakes.



Penguin Peak  
Photo courtesy of Frank Kovalchek

## Indian Valley Trail 4

**Access:** Indian Creek Trailhead (MP 103)  
**Travel Means:** Foot, ski  
**Distance:** 6.3 miles one way to Indian Creek Pass  
**Elevation Gain:** 2,100 feet

This trail wanders through a beautiful old-growth forest and crosses Indian Creek several times on a gradual climb to a panoramic alpine landscape. In winter, this route comprises part of the "Arctic to Indian" ski traverse. The southern end of the Powerline Trail is also accessible from this trailhead.

## Bird Ridge Trail 5

**Access:** Bird Ridge Trailhead (MP 102 and Bird Creek access MP 101.5)  
**Travel Means:** Foot  
**Distance:** 2.5 miles one way  
**Elevation Gain:** 3,400 feet

This popular hike ascends past the timberline to Bird Ridge Point and offers exceptional views of Turnagain Arm and the Kenai Mountains. Make sure to bring proper footwear and plenty of water for this strenuous uphill hike.

## Bird Creek Trails 6

**Access:** Bird Valley Trailhead (MP 100.5)  
**Travel Means:** Foot, bike, ski, horseback, ATV, snowmachine  
**Distance:** 13.2 miles total in lower valley; ATV and bike access ends 4 miles up the valley  
**Elevation Gain:** 400 feet

This network of trails allows you to explore the lower valley surrounding Bird and Penguin creeks by foot, bike, horseback, or ATV. Trails to Bird Pass and Penguin Peak can be accessed from the Bird Valley Trailhead, and Bird Creek Falls can be seen at the west end of the trail system. Trails for skiing and snowmachining make this area a year-round attraction.



Trailside interpretive panels enhance your experience along the accessible Indian to Girdwood Bike Path.



ATVs are a fun way to get around in designated areas.

## Indian to Girdwood Bike Path 7

**Access:** Indian, Bird, Bird Creek Campground, Bird Point, Girdwood  
**Travel Means:** Foot, bike, ski, ADA accessible  
**Distance:** 13.3 miles one way  
**Elevation Gain:** 300 feet

This paved bike path parallels the Seward Highway and the Alaska Railroad where the rugged Chugach Mountains meet the water. The trail offers rest stops, interpretive panels, and countless points of interest. Pump up your tires and spend a day exploring Turnagain Arm the easy way.



Bird Point Wayside

# Know Before You Go

## Fees

Fees are charged for the use of some developed facilities in Chugach State Park. Fees can be paid at the time of use, or frequent visitors can save money by purchasing an annual parking pass online at [www.alaskastateparks.org](http://www.alaskastateparks.org).

## Learn Outdoor Skills

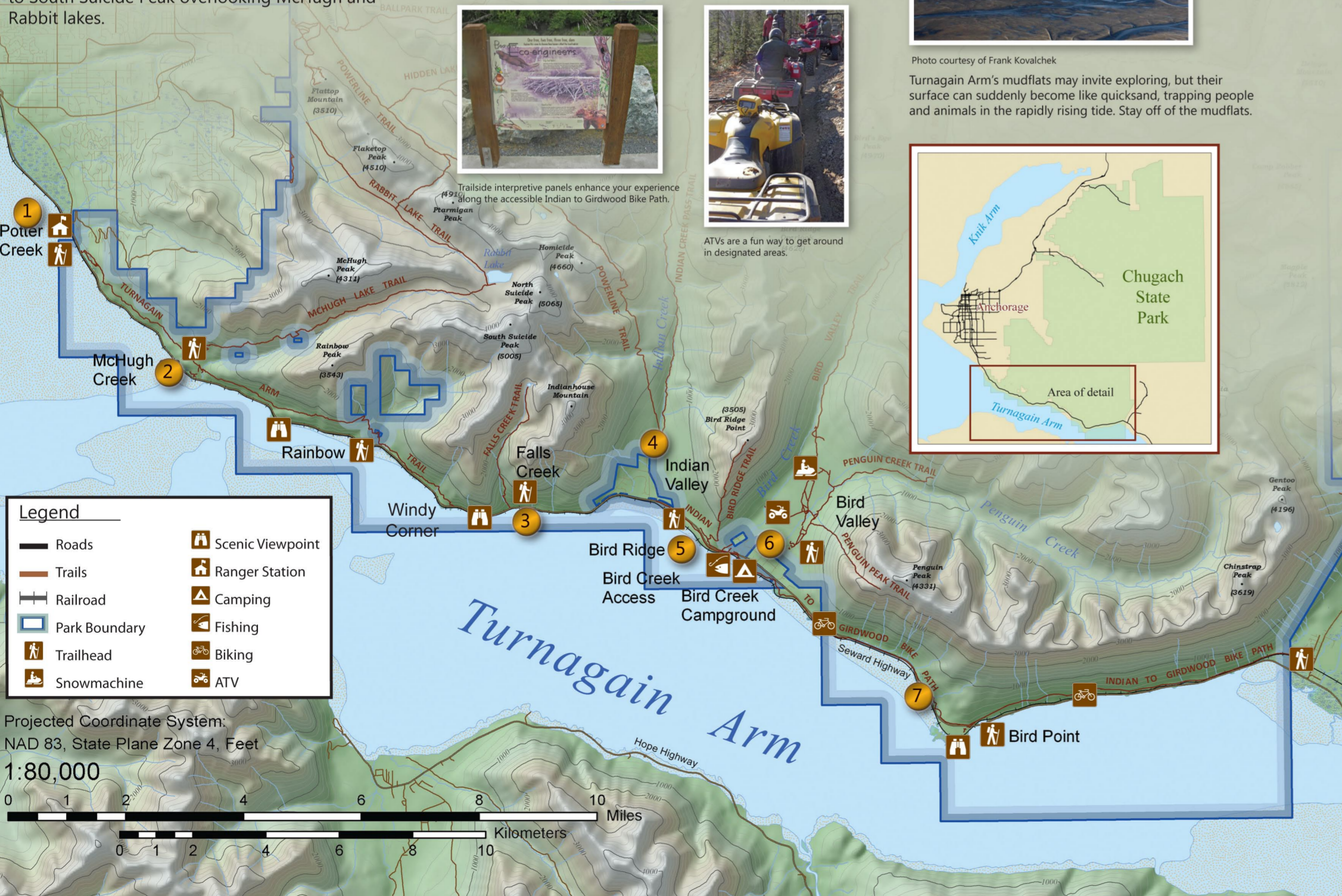
This brochure does not tell you everything you need to know about venturing into the Chugach. Get informed, take a class, or bring an experienced friend.

Tell a friend where you're going, who you're going with, and when you'll return. This is VERY important if something unexpected happens.



Photo courtesy of Frank Kovalchek

Turnagain Arm's mudflats may invite exploring, but their surface can suddenly become like quicksand, trapping people and animals in the rapidly rising tide. Stay off of the mudflats.



# Welcome

The southern end of Chugach State Park is defined by the Turnagain Arm. This picturesque slice of Alaska features towering Penguin Peak, views of the Kenai Mountains across the water, and a rare, wave-like tidal bore that sweeps across the arm twice a day.

With rolling bike paths, heart-pounding hikes, rock and ice climbing, and fantastic fishing, Turnagain Arm is one of the most diverse areas to recreate in Alaska.



Bull moose and Dall's sheep at McHugh Creek  
Photos courtesy of Ted Raynor  
[tedraynorphotoshelter.com](http://tedraynorphotoshelter.com)



Background photo courtesy of Benjamin Wager

# Area Highlights

## Camping

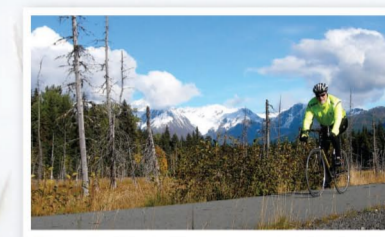
Located at milepost 101 of the Seward Highway, Bird Creek Campground offers: fishing, hiking, camping, and wildlife viewing. Campers can enjoy spectacular sunsets, whale watching, and convenient access to bike paths. Campsites are equipped with fire rings, picnic tables, and nearby water and latrines.

## Wildlife

Turnagain Arm's variety of landscapes and environments are home to diverse Alaskan wildlife including Dall's sheep, bears, bald eagles, and marmots. You can spot beluga whales cresting above the surf or see moose calving areas near McHugh Creek. Make noise when rounding corners so you don't surprise wildlife on the trail. Bring a camera with plenty of zoom and don't get too close!

## Trails

Turnagain Arm is home to some of the most popular and scenic trails in Chugach State Park including the Bird Ridge Trail, Indian to Girdwood bike path, and secluded Falls Creek Trail. Explore the map inside and find your next adventure. For more information visit [www.alaskatrails.org](http://www.alaskatrails.org).



Biking Bird to Gird  
Photo courtesy of Tim Woody

## Fishing

Bird Creek is a popular location for anglers looking to catch silver, pink, and chum salmon in season.



Fishing at Bird Creek

# Welcome to



# Turnagain Arm Trails

in Chugach State Park

## For More Information

Chugach State Park Headquarters  
 Potter Section House  
 18620 Seward Hwy  
 Anchorage, AK 99516  
 (907) 345-5014  
[www.alaskastateparks.org](http://www.alaskastateparks.org)  
[csp@alaska.gov](http://csp@alaska.gov)

Facebook "Chugach State Park" on Facebook

# Turnagain Arm History

## First People

The earliest evidence of humans along Turnagain Arm was found at Beluga Point, which was used as a hunting lookout by Native Alaskans. They traversed the arm in canoes and kayaks to trade with one another and access fishing and hunting sites.

## Northwest Passage

Captain Cook sailed into the Cook Inlet in 1778 in search of the Northwest Passage, but had to "turn again." He named the water body "River Turnagain."

## Gold!

In 1896, a year before the famous Klondike Gold Rush, a stampede brought over 3,000 prospectors to this area. They mined creeks flowing into Turnagain Arm and started the first gold rush towns in Southcentral Alaska.

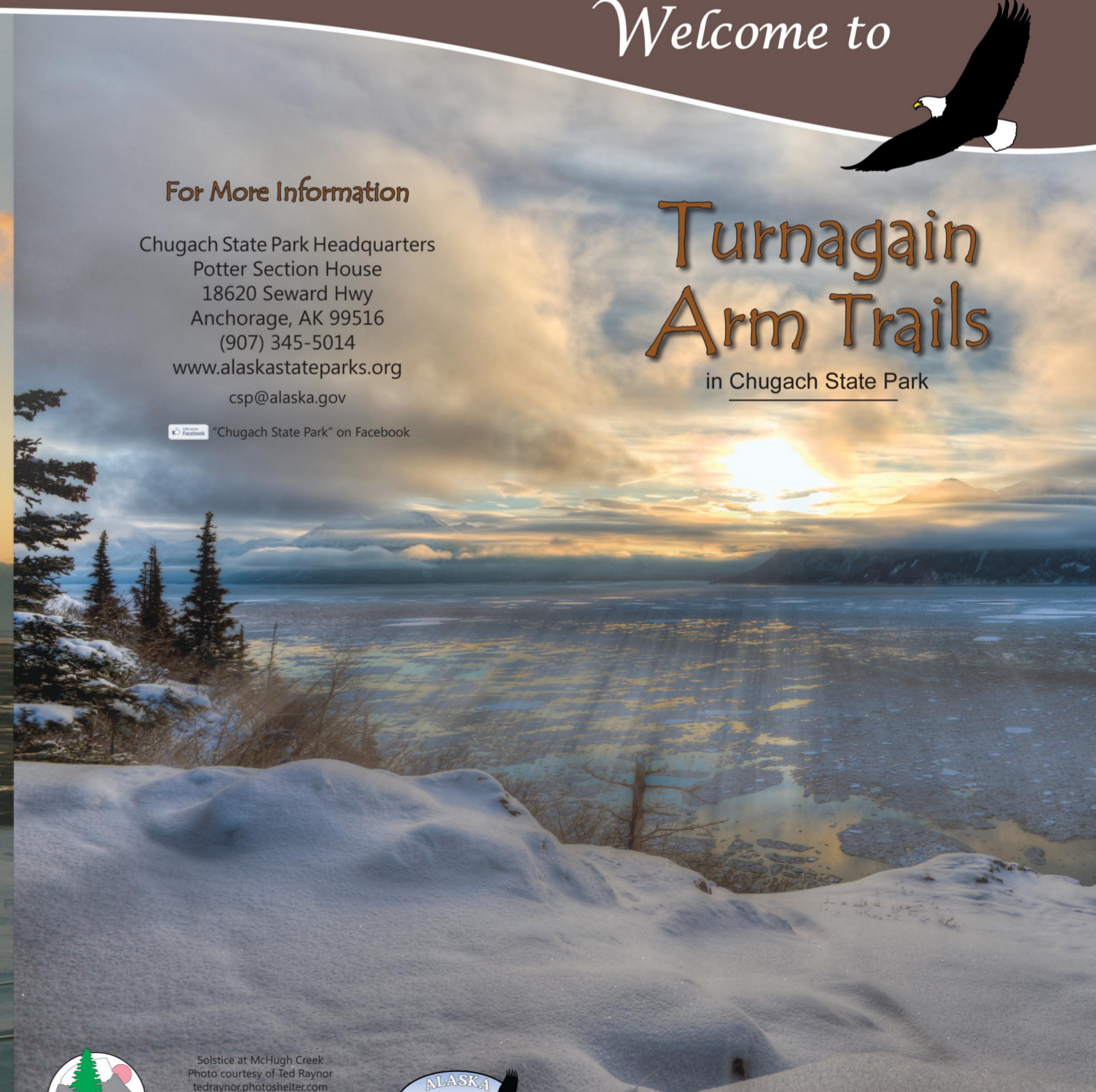
## Alaska Railroad

From 1915 to 1918, crews blazed the Turnagain Arm section of the Alaska Railroad. They blasted more than 30 miles of rock and built long bridges along the section. Some work along the arm cost a whopping \$200,000 per mile!

## Potter Section House

This state historic site features a restored house and outbuildings that were part of a railroad section camp. Today the house serves as the Chugach State Park headquarters.

Photo courtesy of Nat Wilson



Solstice at McHugh Creek  
Photo courtesy of Ted Raynor  
[tedraynorphotoshelter.com](http://tedraynorphotoshelter.com)

