



Kodiak, Alaska

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[www.kodiaktreks.com](http://www.kodiaktreks.com)

## Kodiak Treks Guidelines for Avoiding Adverse Impact on Plant and Animal Species Updated November 2008

Kodiak Treks founders believe that the presence of humans in remote areas has the potential to adversely affect the well-being of animal and plant species who occupy these areas. Even when groups are not immediately engaged in wildlife-viewing activities, their presence in remote areas may cause animals to change their natural course to avoid being in close proximity with human visitors. Additionally, traveling afoot through pristine areas adds impact that may not previously have existed in these regions. This impact includes damage to plant species from being trod upon by human visitors; damage caused by the presence of products used or produced by humans such as insect repellents, fuel products, toothpaste, human waste, and other such products; the introduction of new, non-indigenous organisms and plants; and more serious impact such as that which results from motorized access to remote terrestrial sites (damage to rivers, overused trails, etc.).

To mitigate this potential adverse impact, Kodiak Treks staff attempts to educate guests about this potential and to implement practices aimed at minimizing impact in remote areas.

- ◆ Kodiak Treks staff educates guests about the certain impact *all* visitors to remote areas have on animals and the habitat. Kodiak Treks staff informs guests that the goal of sustainable programs is to balance recreation in pristine areas with education and responsible practices which aim to reduce the potential to jeopardize the well-being of animal and plant species as well as the natural landscape of these areas.
- ◆ Kodiak Treks staff informs guests that they are visitors in Kodiak bears' habitat and that they must adjust to the tempo and value system of the environment. Trips are a minimum of three days in duration in order to allow groups enough time to access Kodiak bear country respectfully and responsibly and avoid promoting a hastened approach to observing wildlife on the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge.

- ◆ Guests are informed that the Kodiak Treks program is founded on the notion of *observing* wildlife as opposed to *interacting* with wildlife. This is a critical distinction. No baiting, calling, or any similar form of disrespect is allowed on Kodiak Treks trips. Guides aim to leave wildlife in a state similar to that which they encountered in their approach (i.e., feeding, resting, traveling) without alteration to these activities invoked by human presence or action.
- ◆ Kodiak Treks staff does not attempt to bring clients as close as possible to wildlife. Instead, the program is designed to provide guests a glimpse into the wild areas where these animals thrive while observing a respectful distance to animals. This distance cannot be quantified except through consideration of myriad factors including knowledge of the area, wind direction, food abundance, bear behavior, and many other natural phenomena.
- ◆ Kodiak Treks education-based approach includes lessons about the geology, botany, and natural history of the Kodiak Archipelago. Literature on regional and local plant and animal life are made available to guests at the lodge, and guests are encouraged to utilize these texts to study and enjoy during their visit. Staff networks with local and state agencies and organizations to access information about the health of local ecosystems and plant and animal species. This information is shared with guests whenever possible.
- ◆ Guests are required to remain quiet in the field so as not to disturb wildlife. Even when guests are on hiking or fishing trips, they are reminded of the impact their presence may have on plants and animals in the area.
- ◆ Staff and guests leave no refuse in the field. Guests are issued small trash receptacles, and areas where groups rest or share are combed thoroughly by staff to ensure no garbage is left in the field. Clients are instructed not to wander on their own in order to limit the spread of human scent and trail development in pristine areas. Staying in a group also minimizes the likelihood of unanticipated client-bear encounters.
- ◆ Harvesting of plants in the field is encouraged when abundant (salmonberries, nettles, etc) and of a known species safe for human consumption. Traditional and medicinal uses of Kodiak Island vegetation will be shared with visitors so as to enrich their appreciation for local culture and history.

Minimizing human impacts on wildlife and native plants is a top priority of Kodiak Treks. We follow procedures which were developed to ensure impacts are minimized while in the field. We also instruct guests regarding appropriate ways to respect the habitat and minimize stress on bears and other wildlife.

Restricting human presence and avoiding important feeding and breeding areas for bears increases the likelihood that bears will maintain access to the resources they require to subsist. Respecting bears and their need for abundant territory increases the likelihood

that programs like Kodiak Treks will be sustainable and result in minimal adverse effects on bears, wildlife, and critical habitat.

Being mindful of our impact on local plant and animal species increases the likelihood that human visitors to remote areas will leave a reduced footprint and permit wildlife to subsist without undue stress. Sharing the value of such an approach to wildlife viewing with guests from around the world encourages them to be mindful of the need to consider the extremely delicate nature of the world's wildlife and the habitat they depend on.