

Pioneer Ridge-Austin Helmers Trail

Non-motorized summer **hiking** trail

- Tread surface:** Dirt and rock surface, 1' to 2' wide
Length: 4.5 miles (8.8 kilometers) one way
Difficulty: Difficult
Activity: Summer – hiking, backpacking, mountain running
Trailhead: Parking area; public toilet facilities; picnic tables
Nearest town: Palmer
Manager: MSB Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division (Phone 745-9690)
Volunteer Trail Care Crew: vacant

How to get there

Access to the Pioneer Ridge-Austin Helmers Trail is from Knik River Road. From Palmer- go southeast on the Old Glenn Highway, after crossing the bridge over the Knik River (approximately 9 ½ miles from Palmer) take a left on Knik River Road, proceed 3 1/2 miles to the entrance of the trailhead on the right.

General description

The Pioneer Ridge-Austin Helmers Trail is a steep hiking trail traversing the northeast slope of Pioneer Peak, climbing over 5000 feet in 4 1/2 miles. The first part of the trail traverses forested areas of old growth cottonwood, spruce, birch, alder and aspen. Near the 2000 foot elevation the trail starts to switch back and forth up the steep nose of a ridge, where the vegetation thins and views of the valley below are around every corner. Fiberglass trail markers placed every 200' guide the way up to the ridge where at about 3200 feet the trail is less steep and hikers reach the ridge crest. The hike to the ridge and back can be completed in a long day, some may prefer to camp overnight. The trail offers wonderful views of the Knik and Matanuska Rivers valleys, the Talkeetna

Mountains, and the Knik Glacier. The trail is physically challenging and tends to be muddy and slippery after a rain or frost. Caution is advised.

The more adventurous can continue on a very primitive route to Pioneer Peak (elevation 6398) about 3miles to the southeast. Climbing beyond the ridge trail to the actual summit of Pioneer Peak should be attempted only by those experienced and equipped for rock climbing. Anyone traveling beyond the marked trail should also have topographic maps and compass, and be skilled in their use.

Trail uses

The Pioneer Ridge-Austin Helmers Trail is maintained by the MSB Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division for hiking.

***Take note**

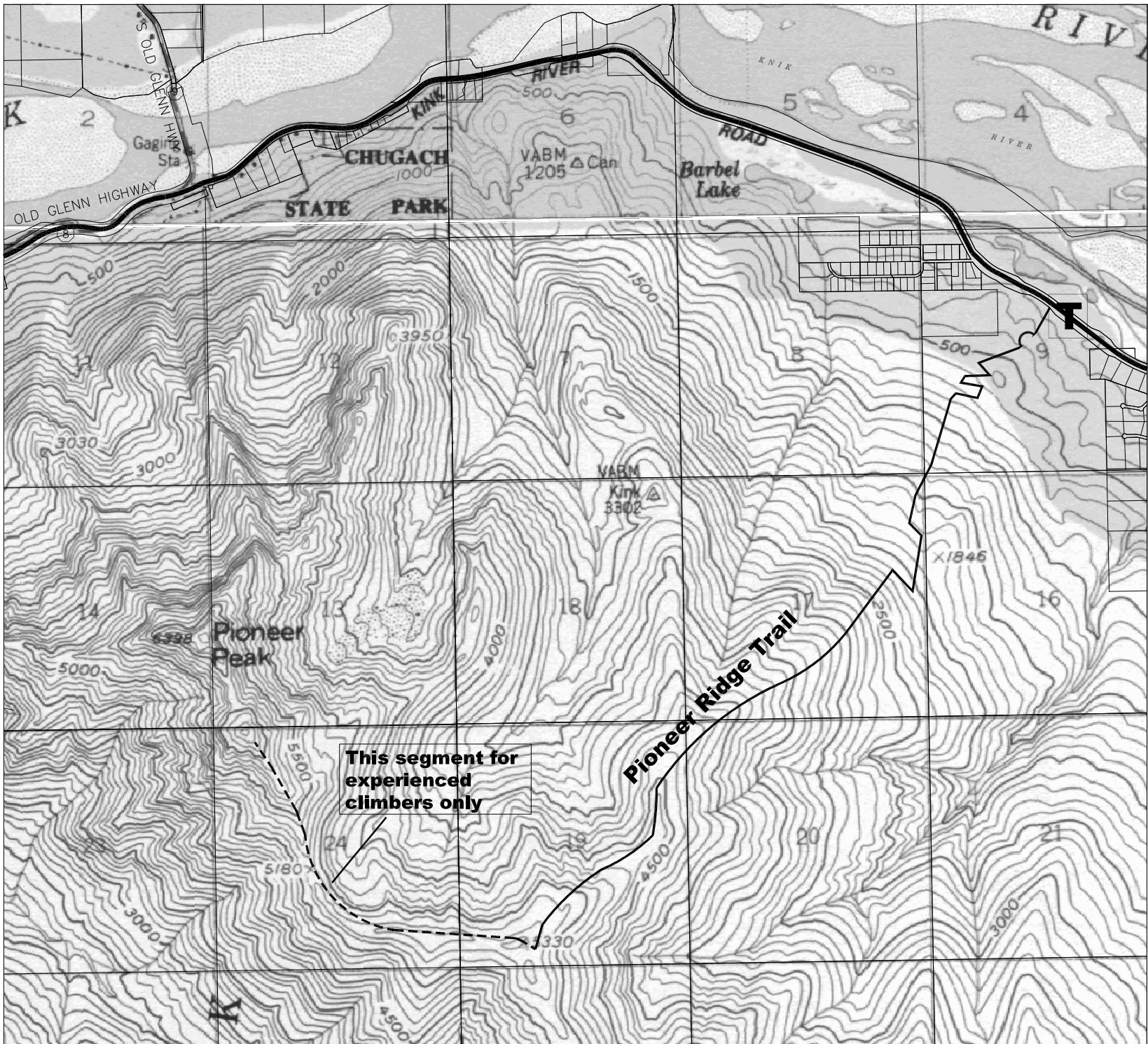
Weather can change quickly at the higher elevations, often bringing fog and low visibility. Be prepared. Bring the appropriate clothing and extra food and water. Bears, moose and other wildlife are native to the area and proper precautions should be taken to make your presence known. Dog should be on leash and/or under your control.

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LEGEND

- T** Trailhead
- 3.5 miles from Knik River Bridge**

