

CROSSING ALASKA

1500 MILES ON FOOT AND WITH PACKRAFTS
IN ALASKA'S MOST REMOTE WILDERNESS

SALOMÉ STÄHLI



1. THE STORY
2. FAQ
3. GEAR
4. FOOD
5. LOGISTICS





THE STORY OF A DREAM



"An enthralling blend of adventure story, insightful memoir, and keen-eyed nature observation." — JENNIFER ACKERMAN, author of *The Genius of Birds*

THE SUN IS A COMPASS

A 4,000-MILE JOURNEY INTO THE ALASKAN WILDS

CAROLINE VAN HEMERT

4,000
MILES
BY BOOT,
RAFT,
AND SKI

A LONG TREK HOME

ERIN MCKITTRICK

Alaska

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Alaska

ADVENTURE
LEVEL MAP



RICARDO

SALOMÉ

WHY ALASKA?



Alaska vs Lower 48



ALASKA IS BIG...

Population Density per State



1 person per square mile
Falklands Islands!!

... AND NOT VERY POPULATED ...

Source: <https://vividmaps.com/us-population-density/>

Highway Map of Alaska

& DOESN'T HAVE
MANY ROADS!



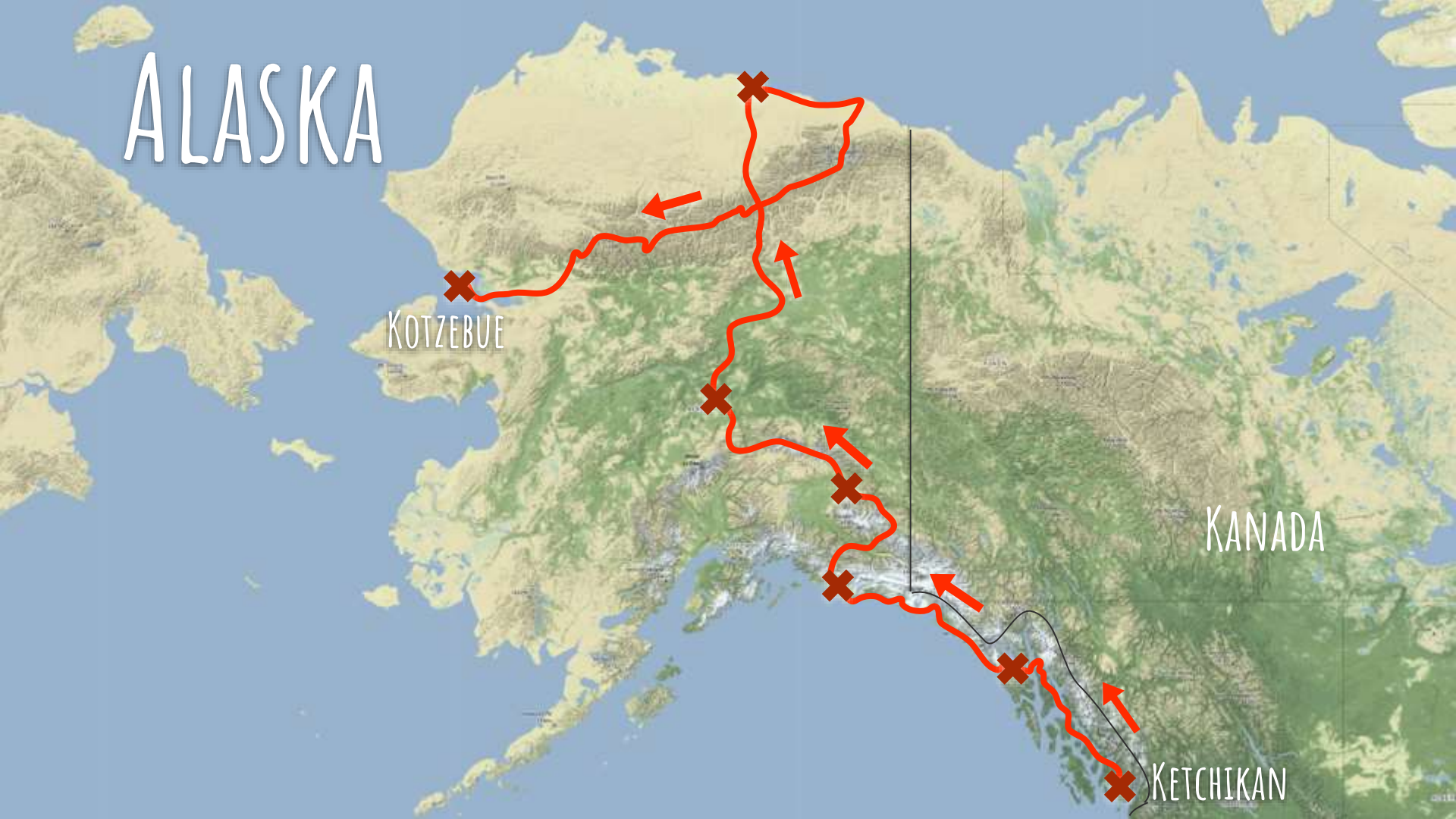
Source:
https://www.reddit.com/r/MapPorn/comments/fn99sj/highway_map_of_alaska/

ALASKA

KOTZEBUE

KANADA

KETCHIKAN









A wide, dark sand beach stretches from the foreground into the distance. On the left, gentle waves with white foam wash onto the shore. In the center-right, a lone figure is walking away from the viewer, leaving a trail of footprints in the sand. The sky is overcast and grey, and a grassy dune is visible on the right side of the frame.

HUMAN-POWERED AND CONTINUOUS FOOTSTEPS

PREPARATIONS





HARDLY ANY ROADS ...



... NO TRAILS ...



...SOMETIMES DIFFICULT TERRAIN...



... ENDLESS BUSHWHACKING ...



...BUT SOMETIMES WE'D FIND BEARTRAILS!



NO BRIDGES...

A person wearing a dark wading suit and a large blue backpack is crossing a turbulent river. They are using wading gear, including a pole and a stick, to navigate the rough water. The background shows a wide river with waves, a sandy beach, and a range of mountains under a cloudy sky.

OFTEN DIFFICULT RIVER CROSSINGS...



...SOMETIMES IMPOSSIBLE!



EVERY NIGHT IN OUR TENT, OFTEN IN THE RAIN...



... SOMETIMES IN THE FOG ...



... AND SOMETIMES IN AMAZING PLACES!



TOWNS EVERY 10-14 DAYS...



Resupply Strategy

Section name	Beak	Person days	Coat	Calc	Weight	Cal/day	Diners	Breakfa	Sovory	Cheese	Nuts &	Cereal	Sweet	Other / day	Cal/100g
Summary	17	3800	834	2841	329	526	280	347	283	187	293	293	487	1052	484
s1a (Kathikan, 9 days)	28%	21	3838	682	3294	438	412	448	381	302	322	603	437	9476	470
s1b (Petersburg, 11 days)	88%	7	4000	932	3778	380	473	534	283	486	183	788	521	1811	488
s2a (Lunasa, 4 days)	94%	27	4384	969	4040	539	897	423	281	474	182	718	1018	3883	480
s2b (Gustava, 13 days)	97%	28	4583	889	4384	485	558	489	314	542	218	688	1040	4370	490
s2c (Yakutsk, 13 days)	91%	18	3000	906	4548	485	517	778	261	774	137	889	157	4235	512
s3a (Cordova, 11 days)	87%	23	3000	862	4390	488	518	440	342	728	328	601	894	1484	488
s3b (McCarthy, 10 days)	89%	18	3800	911	4438	491	674	425	318	678	217	731	774	10703	487
s4a (Boris, 8 days)	88%	15	1686	915	4430	334	588	478	383	744	253	688	812	8548	494
s4b (Robertson Hwy, 8 days)	84%	15	3000	876	4887	466	614	475	485	878	182	752	847	4682	482
s5a (Coffin, 7 days)	88%	13	3000	818	4388	509	532	451	378	638	162	638	828	10218	488
s5b (Dunthorne, 8 days)	89%	17	3000	883	4383	513	487	441	347	728	188	638	1218	8840	484
s6a (Kaktovik, 11 days)	91%	21	3800	918	4627	480	488	377	327	681	328	888	888	4027	484
s6b (Arctic V, 9 days)	90%	18	3800	888	4728	604	608	637	482	628	284	721	888	3218	488
s7a (Doris Hwy, 8 days)	97%	7	3000	918	4632	404	513	496	381	1062	308	888	741	6388	488
s7b (Arctic Hwy, 8 days)	88%	33	3000	884	4431	612	638	481	410	543	288	812	1072	8881	487
s7c (Arctic, 11 days)	88%	17	3000	1018	4802	781	468	354	403	483	334	628	1888	8881	487



...FOOD FOR 5 MONTHS (1.5 MILLION CALORIES)...



...OPTIMIZING OUR GEAR...



...CREATING A SAFETY PLAN AND TEAM.





SECTION I

THE INSIDE PASSAGE



ALASKA

APRIL 2021

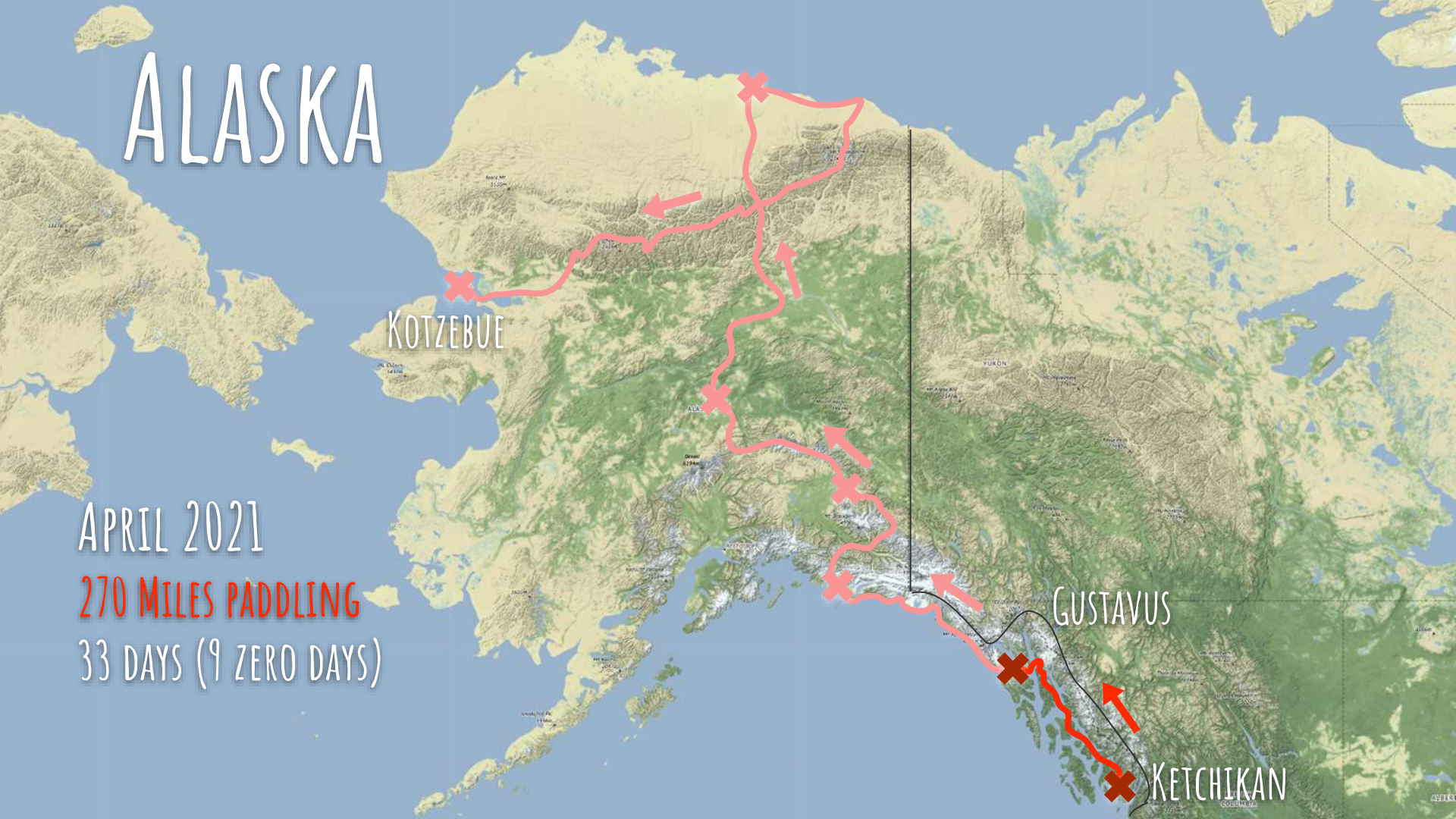
270 MILES PADDLING

33 DAYS (9 ZERO DAYS)

KOTZEBUE

GUSTAVUS

KETCHIKAN







YES BAY





PETERSBURG



CAP FANSHAW









5 FINGER LIGHTHOUSE









STEPHEN'S PASSAGE





EXCURSION INLET

SECTION II

THE LOST COAST



ALASKA

KOTZEBUE

CORDOVA

GUSTAVUS

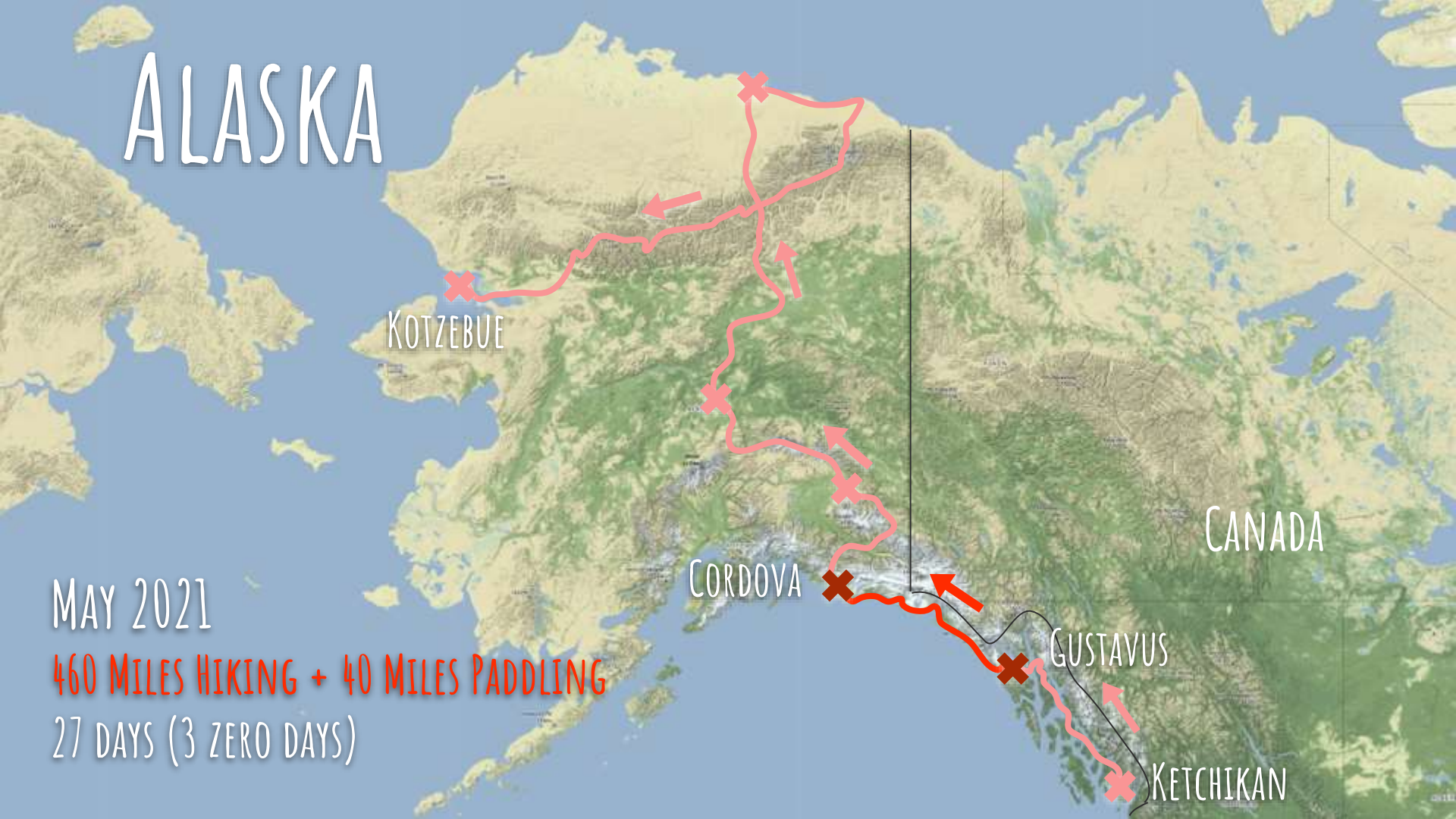
KETCHIKAN

CANADA

MAY 2021

460 MILES HIKING + 40 MILES PADDLING

27 DAYS (3 ZERO DAYS)





YAKUTAT BAY





TAYLOR BAY









BRADY GLACIER

















MALASPINA GLACIER







YAKUTAT BAY













CAPE SITKAGI



ICY BAY





Bushplane

CORDOVA

ICY BAY

GUSTAVUS



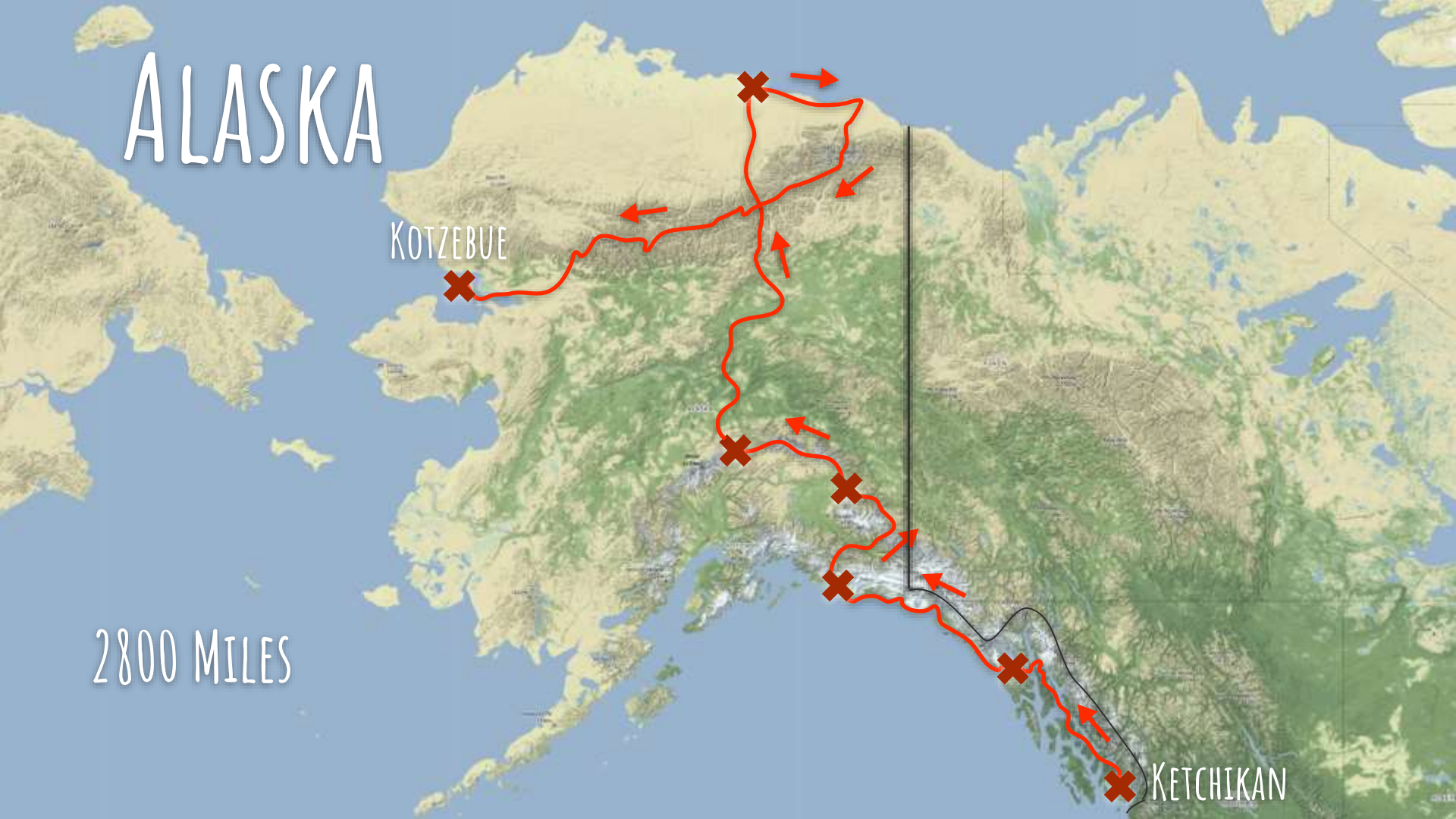
SFYMOUR CANAL

ALASKA

KOTZEBUE

2800 MILES

KETCHIKAN

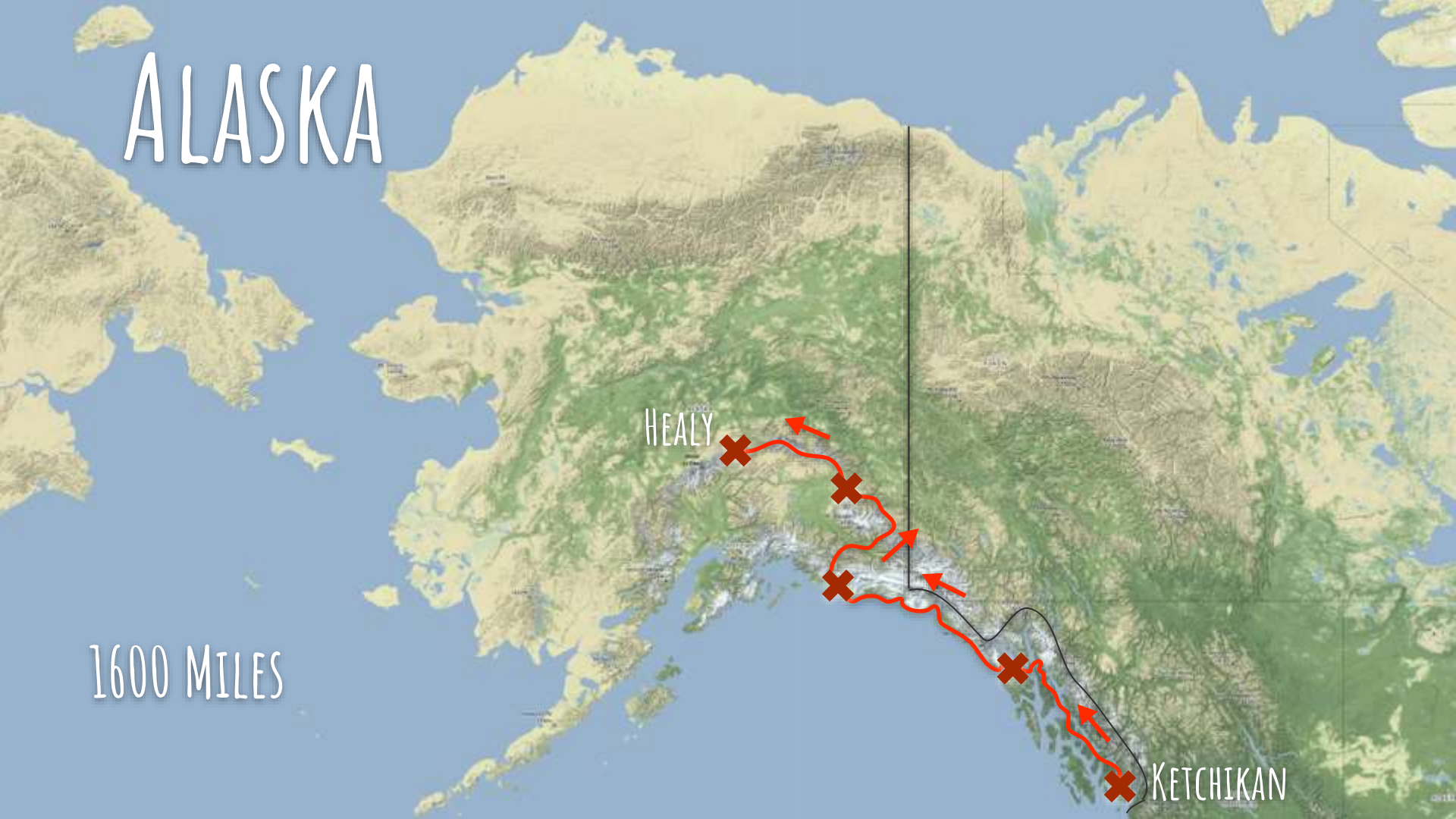


ALASKA

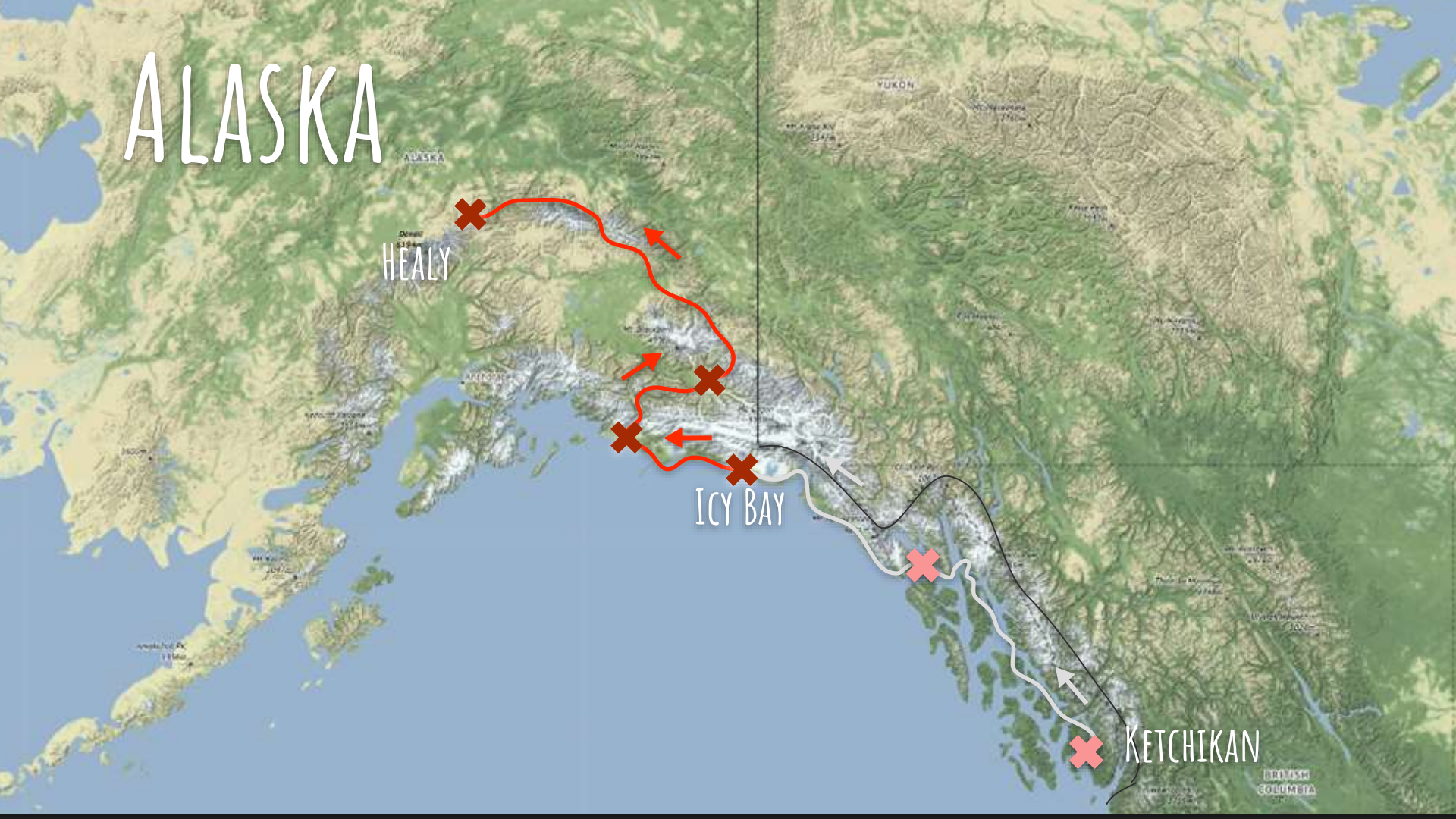
1600 MILES

HEALY

KETCHIKAN



ALASKA



HEALY

ICY BAY

KETCHIKAN

YUKON

BRITISH COLUMBIA

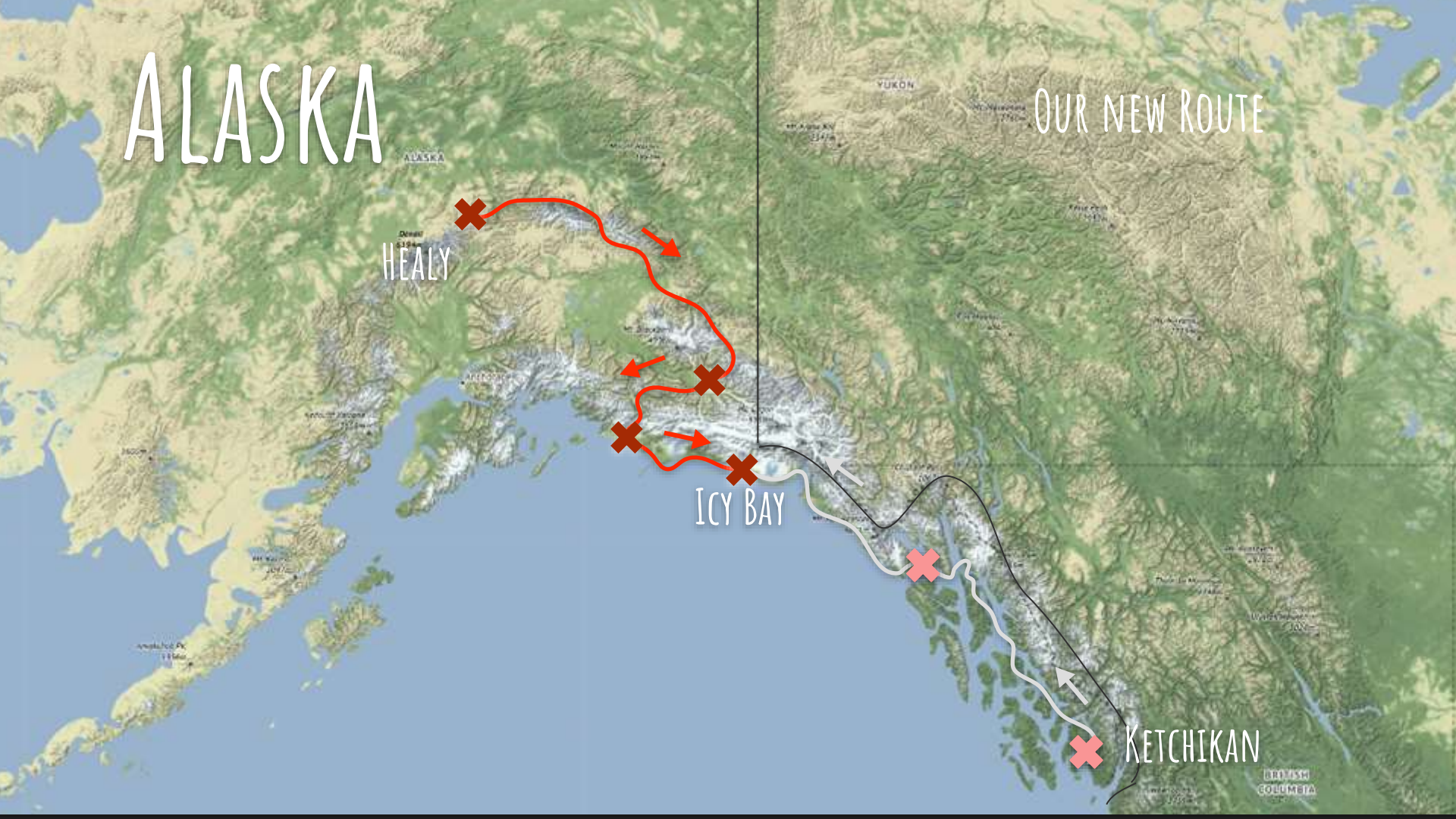
ALASKA

OUR NEW ROUTE

HEALY

ICY BAY

KETCHIKAN



SECTION III

ALASKA RANGE



ALASKA

HEALY

SLANA

ICY BAY

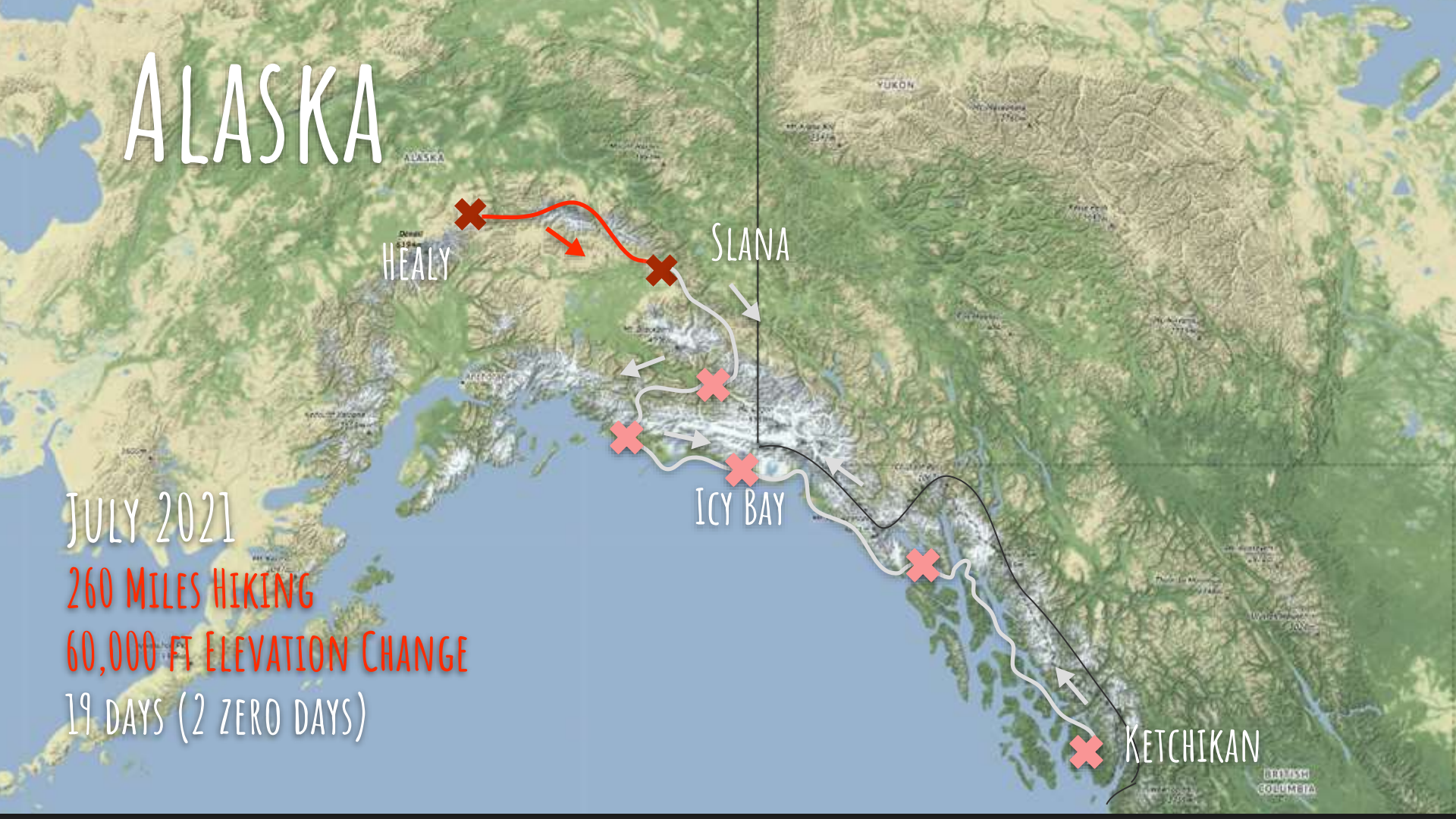
KETCHIKAN

JULY 2021

260 MILES HIKING

60,000 FT ELEVATION CHANGE

19 DAYS (2 ZERO DAYS)





MOUNT HAYES



GULKANA RIVER





CHISTOCHINA GLACIER









CHISTOCHINA GLACIER



DOGWOODS



ARCTIC GENTIAN



MOUNTAIN
DEATH CAMAS



DWARF FIREWEED



FORGET-ME-NOT



WESTERN INDIAN
PAINTBRUSH









WHISTLER CREEK









TRIDENT GLACIER

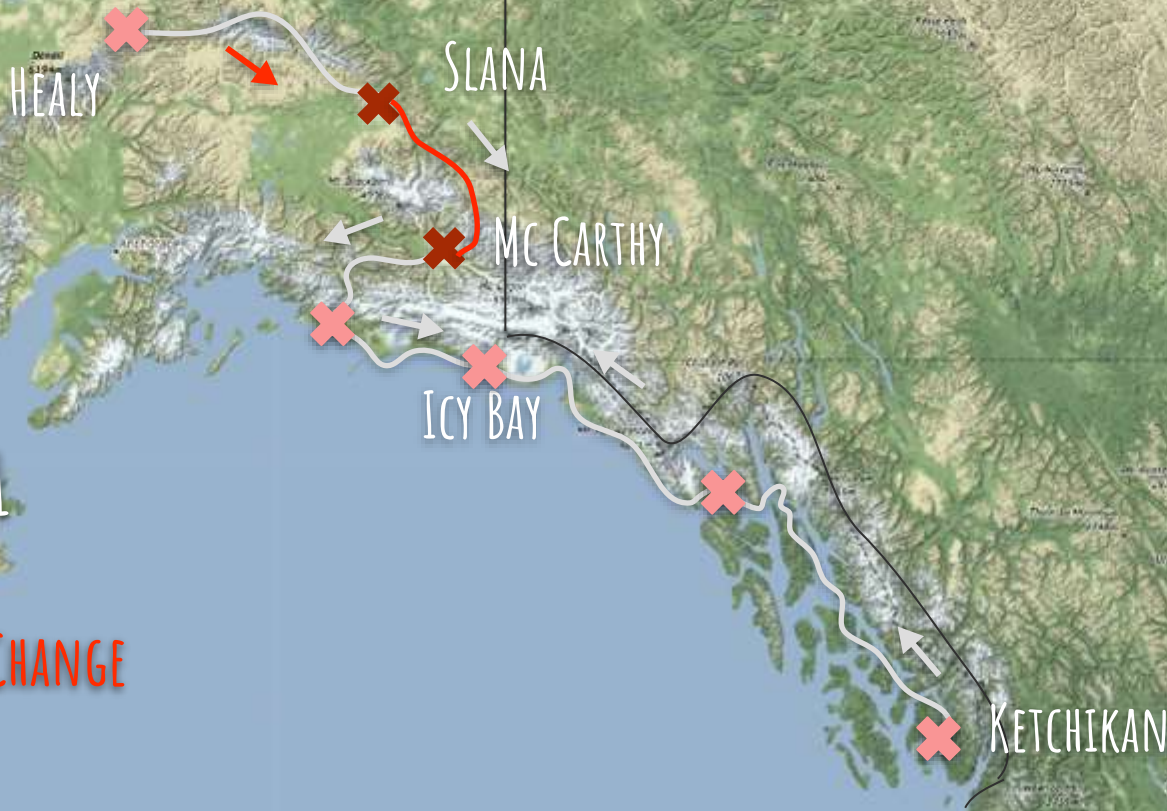


SECTION IV

THE WRANGELLS



ALASKA



JULY/AUGUST 2021

180 MILES HIKING

23,000 FT ELEVATION CHANGE

11 DAYS (1 ZERO DAYS)



NABESNA RIVER









CHISANA







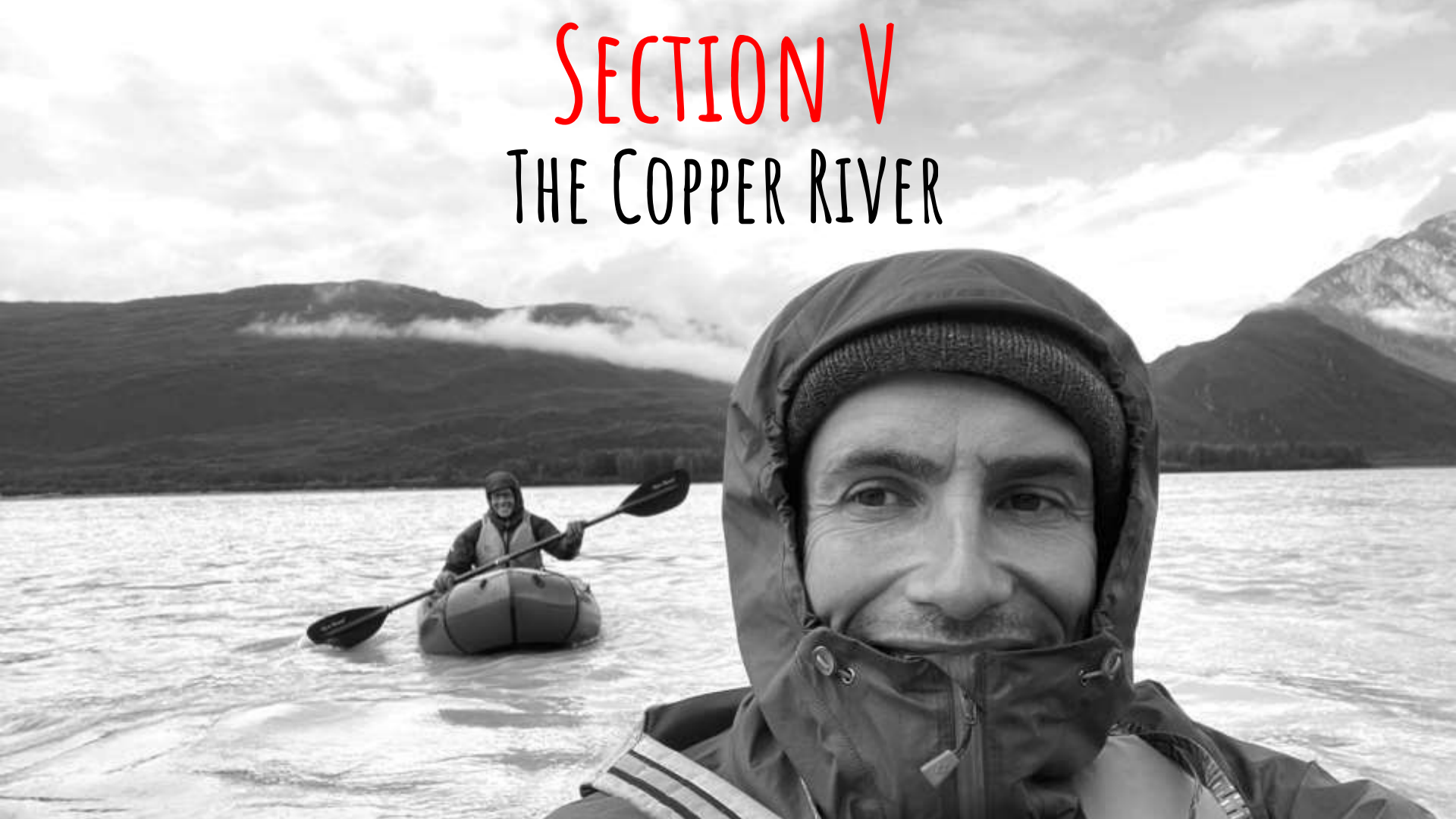
SKOLAI PASS





SECTION V

THE COPPER RIVER



ALASKA

HEALY

MC CARTHY

CORDOVA

ICY BAY

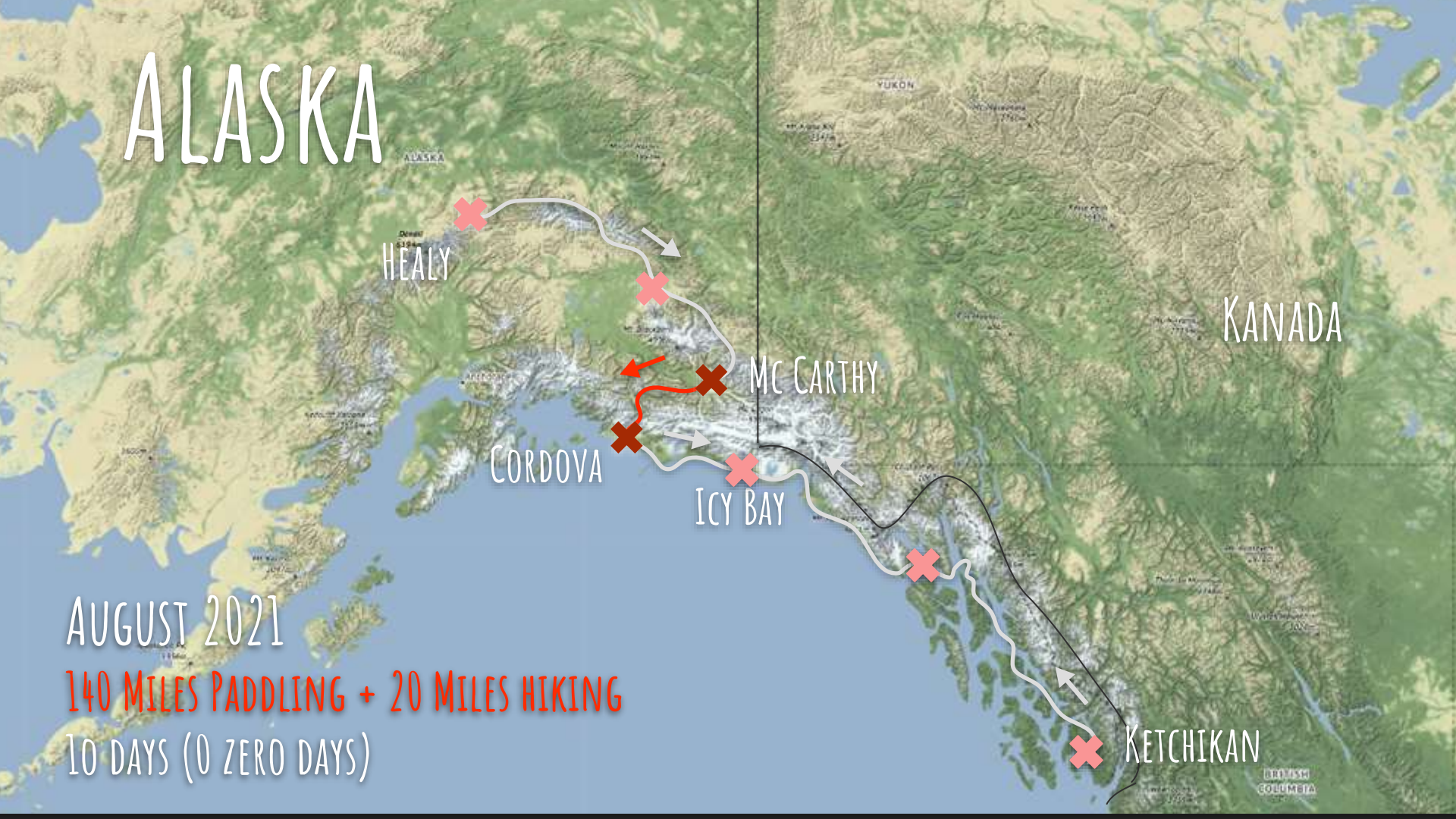
KANADA

KETCHIKAN

AUGUST 2021

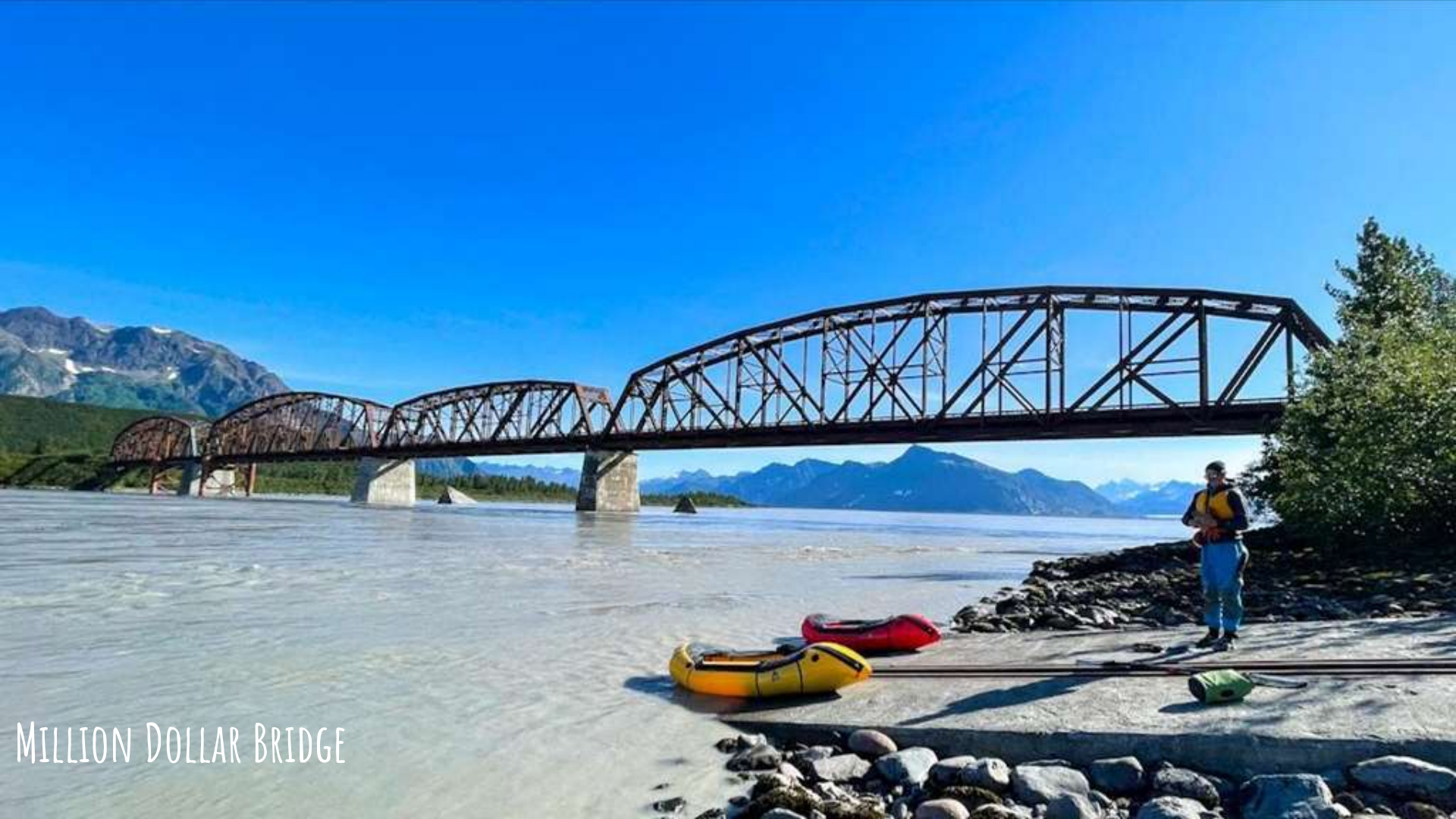
140 MILES PADDLING + 20 MILES HIKING

10 DAYS (0 ZERO DAYS)









MILLION DOLLAR BRIDGE



Welcome to Childs Glacier
Chugach National Forest



CHILDS GLACIER



SECTION IV

BACK ON THE LOST COAST



ALASKA

HEALY

CORDOVA

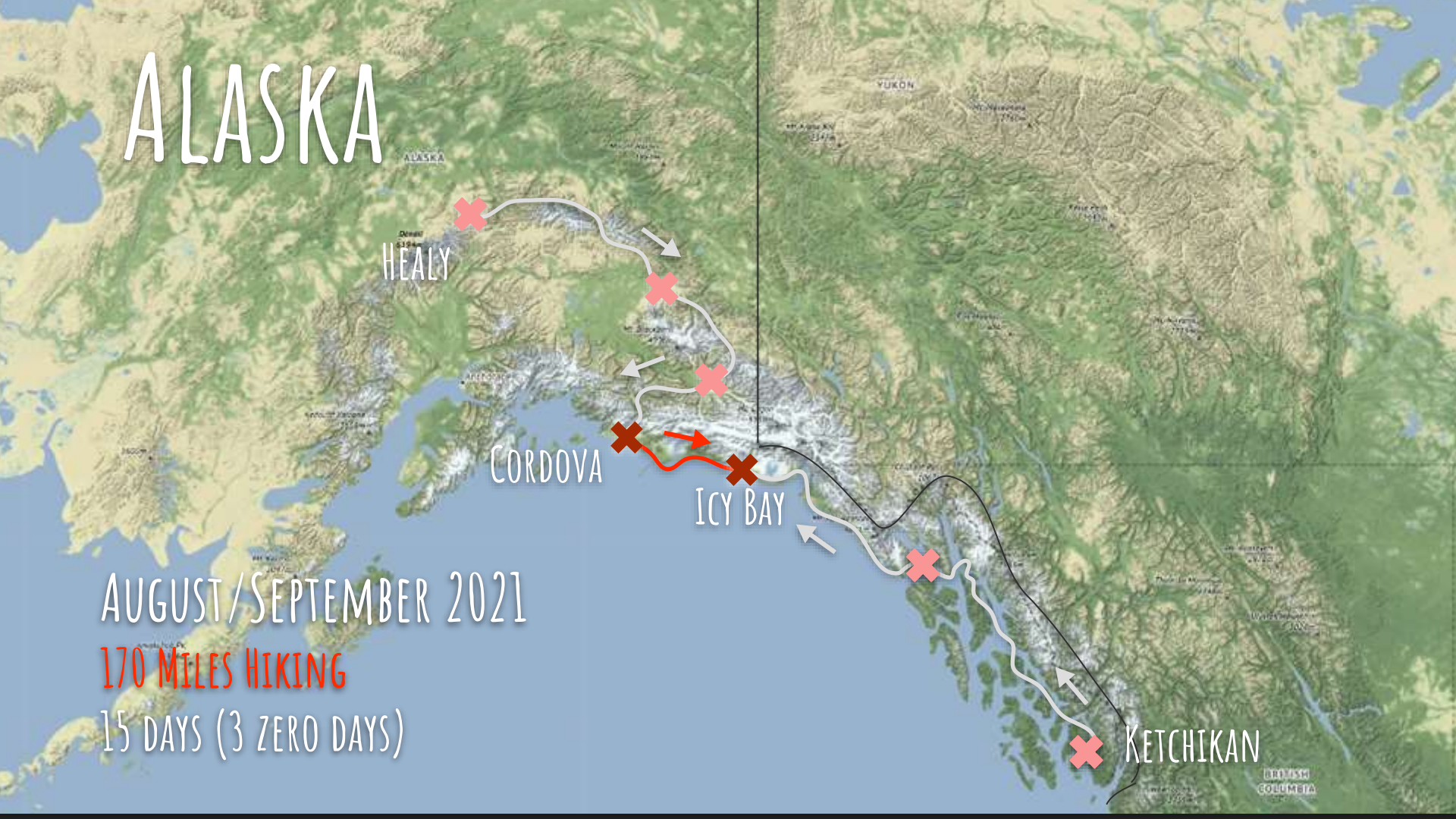
ICY BAY

KETCHIKAN

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2021

170 MILES HIKING

15 DAYS (3 ZERO DAYS)





CONTROLLER BAY





SEAL RIVER





SOFTUK BAR PUBLIC USE CABIN



ICY BAY





MT ST ELIAS











WHAT IS YOUR DREAM?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



HOW MANY MILES?



HOW MANY MILES?



*1400 miles in total
440 miles paddling
960 miles hiking*

HOW MANY DAYS MOVING?



HOW MANY DAYS MOVING?

101 days



HOW MANY DAYS WITHOUT RAIN?





HOW MANY DAYS WITHOUT RAIN?

*37 dry days
(64 rainy days)*

HOW MANY DAYS WITH DRY FEET?



HOW MANY DAYS WITH DRY FEET?

5 days
(walking on roads)



HOW MANY NIGHTS IN A TENT?



A man with dark hair, wearing a blue jacket with orange accents and black pants, is lying on a yellow sleeping pad inside a tent. He is resting his head on his hand and looking towards the camera. The tent has a green outer shell and a black mesh inner layer. A blue sleeping bag is visible to the right. A silver tent pole is in the foreground. In the bottom left, a green bag with the word 'SUMMIT' is partially visible.

HOW MANY NIGHTS IN A TENT?

69 nights

(+15 nights in hut, shacks, lighthouse)

HOW MANY OTHER HIKERS MET?



HOW MANY OTHER HIKERS MET?



Zero

HOW HEAVY WAS YOUR BACKPACK?



HOW HEAVY WAS YOUR BACKPACK?

13lbs baseweight
+ 13lbs packrafts
+ 2lbs food pppd
= max 60lbs



HOW MANY PAIRS OF SHOES?



HOW MANY PAIRS OF SHOES?



3 pairs each



HOW MANY PAIRS
OF SOCKS?



HOW MANY PAIRS
OF SOCKS?

6 & 8 pairs

HOW MANY BEAR ENCOUNTERS?



HOW MANY BEAR ENCOUNTERS?



52 with 6 close ones



ANY OTHER
ANIMALS?



HUMPBACK WHALES
ORCAS
DALL PORPOISES
SEALS
SEA LIONS
RIVER OTTERS
SEA OTTERS
MINKS
BALD EAGLES
GULLS
ARCTIC TERNS



WOLVES: 3
LYNX: 1
COYOTES: 6
FOXES: 4
MOOSE: 20
CARIBOU: 54
DALL SHEEP: 40
GROUND SQUIRRELS
GROUSE
PTARMIGAN

GEAR, FOOD AND LOGISTICS



PACKRAFTING GEAR

- ALPACKA RAFT CLASSIC
- AQUABOUND WHISKEY CARBON 4-PIECE PADDLE
- HOMEMADE PFDS
- KOKATAT HYDRUS 3.0 DRY SUIT
- ORANGE SHOWA GLOVES
- INSULATED PANTS
- MARINE VHF + GARMIN INREACH MINI

FULL GEAR LIST: WWW.NORTH2ARCTIC.COM





OTHER GEAR

- MLD DUOMID XL DCF TENT
- EE ACCOMPLICE 10°F 2-PERSON QUILT
- ULA EPIC MODIFIED PACK
- TOAKS TITANIUM ALCOHOL STOVE
- TRAILRUNNERS
- DJI MINI 2 DRONE
- GARMIN INREACH MINI

FULL GEAR LIST: WWW.NORTH2ARCTIC.COM





FOOD

- 100 CAL/OZ MIN
- 2500 CAL/PPPD, INCREASE EVERY 10 DAYS BY 500 CAL/PPPD, MAX 5000 CAL/PPPD
- SAMPLE MEAL PLAN:
 - SEMOLINA W/ BERRIES, BUTTER POWDER
 - NUTS, CRACKERS, CHEESE, CEREAL & CANDY BARS
 - POLENTA W/ DRIED PEPPERS, CHEESE POWDER, NUTELLA, PB, COOKIES

FOOD STORAGE

- LOKSAK OPSAK
- COOK THEN WALK ANOTHER 15 MIN





FOOD RESUPPLIES

- BY MAIL:
 - GENERAL DELIVERY TO POST OFFICES (PETERSBURG, JUNEAU, GUSTAVUS, CORDOVA, DELTA JUNCTION, SLANA)
 - PACKAGE SENT TO KENNICOT GLACIER LODGE
- BY BUSH PLANE:
 - ALASKA EXPEDITION LODGE (TSIU RIVER)

"TRAILHEADS"

- ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY FERRY OR FLIGHT TO KETCHIKAN
- FLIGHT TO FAIRBANKS, TRAIN TO DENALI NP, HITCHHIKING TO HEALY
- BUSHPLANE ICY BAY TO CORDOVA
- ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY FERRY FROM CORDOVA TO WHITTIER, TRAIN TO ANCHORAGE



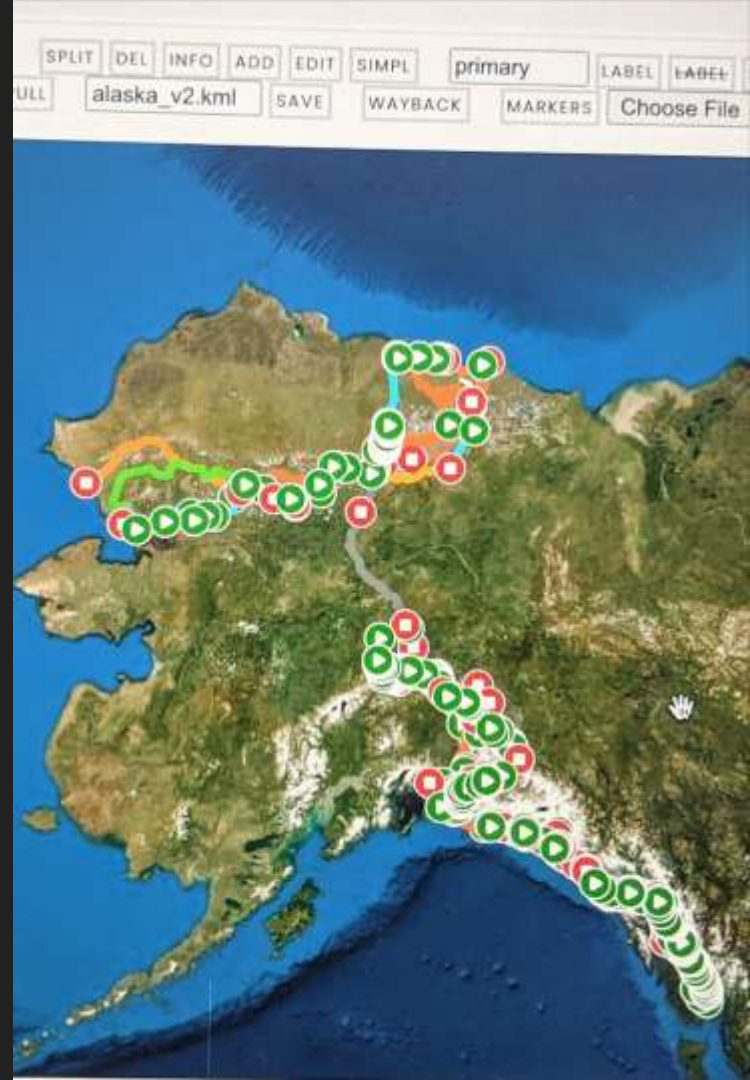


PERMITS

- NONE
- EXCEPTION: CAMPING INSIDE GLACIER BAY AS OF MAY 1

ROUTE PLANNING AND NAVIGATION

- ROUTE PLANNING:
 - READ BLOGS
 - STUDY MAPS AND SAT IMAGES
 - GAIA, GOOGLE EARTH, HOMEMADE MAPPING TOOL (ESRI)
- NAVIGATION:
 - GAIA ON PHONES
 - BACKUP: PRINTED MAPS (CALTOPO), COMPASS





SKILLS

- RIVER CROSSINGS
 - FORDING
 - FERRYING WITH PACKRAFT
- LONG DISTANCE BACKPACKING EXPERIENCE
 - MENTAL ASPECT
 - UNDERSTANDING FOOD NEEDS AND FOOD RATIONING
 - LIGHTWEIGHT MINIMAL GEAR + HOW TO FIX
- NAVIGATION IN TRAILLESS TERRAIN
 - ROUTE FINDING
 - THINKING BEFORE WALKING
- PADDLING EXPERIENCE
 - RIVER
 - OCEAN
- BUT MOSTLY, BEING GOOD AT SUFFERING ;-)

RECOMMENDED SECTIONS

- SKOLAI PASS - GLACIER CREEK (WRANGELLS)
 - HIKING THE WRANGELL ST-ELIAS NP & PRESERVE (A FALCON GUIDE)
 - FLY IN AND OUT FROM MCCARTHY
- COPPER RIVER (CHITINA TO CORDOVA)
 - SHUTTLE TO CHITINA FROM ANCHORAGE
 - FERRY AND TRAIN FROM CORDOVA TO ANCHORAGE
 - THE ALASKA RIVER GUIDE (KAREN JETTMAR)
- ALASKA RANGE (INTERSECTION RICHARDSON HWY & GULKANA RIVER TO SLANA)
 - REACHING "TRAILHEADS" REQUIRES TRICKY HITCHHIKING
 - BLOG LUC MEHL



RESOURCES

INSIDE PASSAGE:

- KAYAKING THE INSIDE PASSAGE (ROBERT H. MILLER)

LOST COAST:

- NO GUIDEBOOKS
- BLOGS (ANDREW SKURKA, ROMAN DIAL)

ALASKA RANGE:

- NO GUIDEBOOKS
- BLOGS (ANDREW SKURKA, LUC MEHL)

WRANGELLS:

- GUIDEBOOKS ONLY FOR 1/4 OF THE SECTION:
HIKING THE WRANGELL ST-ELIAS NP & PRESERVE (A FALCON GUIDE)
- BLOGS (LUC MEHL, ROMAN DIAL)

COPPER RIVER:

- THE ALASKA RIVER GUIDE (KAREN JETTMAR)

OTHER:

- THE PACKRAFT HANDBOOK (LUC MEHL)
- THE SUN IS A COMPASS (CAROLINE VAN HEMERT)
- A LONG TREK HOME (ERIN MCKITTERICK)

THANK YOU!

TO OUR GROUND TEAM:

- CATHERINE
- ORIOL & AMY
- MARK
- BREANNA & THEO
- MACARENA

TO OUR OTHER HELPERS:

- SEREF
- LINA
- RICK & FRANCINE

TO OUR FRIENDS AND FAMILIES, WHO DID
NOT STOP US FROM REALIZING THIS DREAM EVEN THOUGH
THEY WERE SCARED FOR US

TO OUR PLANNING HELPERS:

- BRETWOOD HIGMAN & ERIN MCKITTERICK
- ROMAN DIAL
- LUC MEHL
- ANDREW SKURKA
- CAROLINE VAN HEMERT

TO OUR HELPERS ON THE GROUND:

- ARTHUR HÄFLIGER (CHISANA)
- JEFF ERICKSON & THOMAS CUMPS (FIVE FINGER LIGHTHOUSE)
- STEVE RICHARDS (RIDGELINE AVIATION)
- LESLIE & JASON SEMLER (ALASKA ADVENTURE LODGE)
- KIRK & ISAAC ELLIS (DEVIL'S MOUNTAIN LODGE)

TO OUR HOSTS:

- DIANNE & LAUGHLIN
- ELLIE
- ANNIE & JIM
- KRISTI
- CLIFF
- LAUREN



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