



↑ Killer whales frequent Alaska’s bays and inlets 12 months a year.  
↓ Reflections on Auke Lake.



To return to our tale of two sections, the rocky lookout over the massive river of ice is the turnaround point for the West Glacier Trail, but for those who plan to continue to the summit of McGinnis, this is where the hike really begins in earnest. The mountain’s apex is still another 3 km (2 mi) and about 853 m (2,800 ft) of elevation gain away. From here to the summit, the trail transforms into a sporadically marked route. Due to its exacting nature, it should only be attempted by fit and well-equipped hikers (see info box) with a good sense of direction.

Tracing the mountain’s eastern ridge, tree line is reached at approximately 701 m (2,300 ft). For the remainder of the ascent, the route passes through an enchanting alpine landscape of flowery meadows, picturesque ponds, lingering snowfields, and soothing streams. For those who would like to overnight on Mount McGinnis, this is the area in which to do so. Campsite options abound, with sunsets and sunrises from this lofty perch adding another dimension to an already classic hike.

After approximately three to five hours of climbing, you will arrive at the top of Mount McGinnis. The 360-degree panorama is one of Alaska’s finest—which is saying a great deal. On a clear day, hikers can see Auke Bay, Douglas and Admiralty Islands, the Chilkat Range, the Juneau Icefield, and the star of this extraordinary ice-age production, Mendenhall Glacier. If you have spent any time traveling around the United States, the summit vista will confirm that Juneau is not only America’s most isolated state capital, but also its most scenic.



**“Juneau is the sole capital city in the United States that can’t be reached by road. Cut off from the rest of Alaska by the Pacific Ocean, the Coast Range, and the Juneau Icefield, it’s only accessible by air or sea.”**

↑ Mendenhall Ice Caves.  
← Aurora Borealis over Juneau.