

Walk Overland, Hike — Nunakuarluni

NUNAKUARTUQ KAL'UNUN. – HE IS WALKING TO KARLUK.



Photo: Ouzinkie residents prepared for a hike, 1940s.
Smith Collection, courtesy of Tim and Norman Smith.

Before airplanes and motorized boats, Alutiiq families often traveled by foot. Walking long distances was an activity that people accepted and enjoyed. Travelers crossed rivers and mountains to visit family and friends, to move to and from hunting and fishing camps, to trade with neighbors, or to access seasonal jobs. Some travelers followed well-worn trails, routes used for millennia by people and animals. Others hiked to ridge tops, using Kodiak's mountain chains as a path across the island. It was easier to walk across the tundra of alpine environments.

Even kayakers took advantage of overland routes. Elders recall traveling from Olga Bay to the village of Ayakulik via an interior route. They paddled up the Akalura River and across Akalura Lake to access a portage trail leading into Red Lake. After carrying their boats and supplies over the swampy trail, they camped on the lakeshore before paddling across Red Lake and down Red River into the waters of the Ayakulik. This route allowed travelers to avoid the treacherous waters at the tip of the Alitak Peninsula. It also provided a chance to fish for salmon along the way.

A related portage took people across the isthmus that separates Olga Bay from Shelikof Strait. Portages from Kaguyak to Alitak Bay, from Kalsin Bay to Ugak Bay, from Ugak Bay to Kiliuda Bay, and others helped travelers to avoid dangerous headlands.