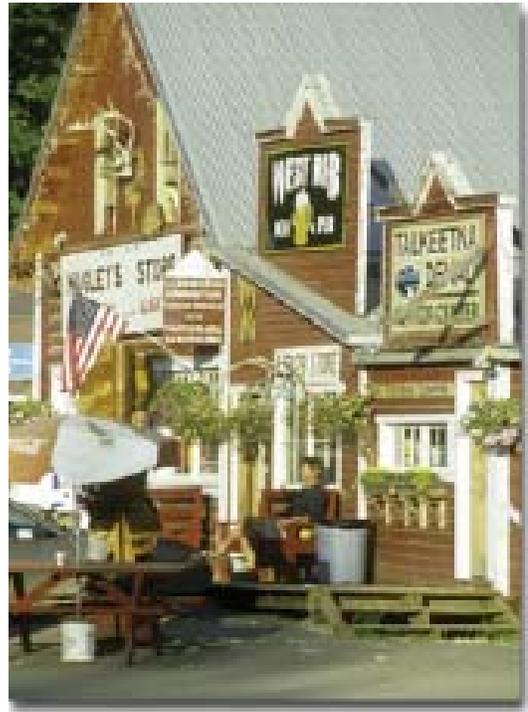


# Welcome to my world, Talkeetna!

When I first thought of moving to Talkeetna from the Denali Park area, my friend told me “you will just LOVE it...Talkeetna is so bohemian!” I wasn’t quite sure just what she meant, but I knew the winters would be less harsh than on the north side of the Alaska Range. I already knew that the Alaska Range, in full panorama, rises from the river flats just 60 air miles northwest of the village and provides one of the most dramatic views of Mt. McKinley seen from the road system. When I made the move and drove down the 14-mile Spur Road from the Parks Highway, the hand painted “Welcome to beautiful Downtown Talkeetna” sign, rising out of a rusted wheelbarrow full of flowers, was my first indication that this little town of 800 was indeed a bit on the funky side.

There is no driving through Talkeetna...the road simply ends where the Talkeetna River flows into the Susitna river. Time clicks into a lower gear once you hit the three blocks which make up Talkeetna’s Main Street; dogs have been known to sleep in the road and you are just as likely to share the right of way with four wheelers in summer and snowmachines in winter as you are with automobiles. Talkeetna’s Historic District includes a patchwork of buildings that made the unincorporated village a mining and trapping resupply hub in the late 30s, but also includes buildings that date back as early as 1914 such as Frank Lee’s Cabin and Barn (in operation since the 40’s as the Talkeetna Roadhouse), the Historic Fairview Inn (where President Harding enjoyed one of his last drinks) and the Three German’s Cabin (now Berry Delightful).

In the early 20’s the Alaska Railroad laid tracks that split Talkeetna into a downtown district and what locals call “East Talkeetna.” Downtown’s airfield, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is the gravel Village Airstrip with the river on one end of the runway and the Fairview Inn. It’s not unusual to be sitting in a downtown beer garden and watch a plane nearly clip the top of the Fairview Inn on its determined descent back to earth. Over in East Talkeetna there is the state airport where a handful of resident air taxi services have set up shop, some since the 40’s. These air taxi services take climbers up to the



7,200-foot base camp on Denali during climbing season, anglers out to remote lakes throughout the summer, mail to off road residents and tourists into the Alaska Range for year round flightseeing tours.

Because Talkeetna’s downtown is walkable with a post office, grocery, radio station, library, fire hall, elementary school, and a handful of pubs and eateries, I figured it would be a good place to land. Winters proved to be full of community events and the summers attract droves of people from the world over coming for a variety of activities: rafting, flightseeing, dog kennel tours, jet boat rides, quiet hikes in our Talkeetna Lakes Park, biking along the 14-mile paved Spur Road path or just walking down to the river to take in the view. Our Denali Arts Council’s home is in the old Don Sheldon airplane hangar that sits at the north end of the Village Airstrip. From plays to concerts, music lessons to meetings to memorials, the Council shines the light on our local talent.

So, I suppose if this is bohemian, then yes, I DO love it here in Talkeetna!

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