

WILLOW

Population: 1,100

The trail begins on Willow Lake and winds through typical northern forests, consisting of alternating birch woods and spruce swamps. Most of the trail is flat to gently rolling hills.

Distance to Nome: 964 miles



YENTNA

Population: 8

The river stays between well-defined banks for about five miles upstream from Yentna Station, and also for the last 15 miles into Skwentna. In the middle 15 miles it branches out into a maze of channels and sloughs, any of which can have a trail for local traffic. This is normally a fast run with no hills, provided the trail is in good shape; most teams make the leg in three to four and a half hours.

Distance to Nome: 922 miles



SKWENTNA

Population: 90

Located near the confluence of the Skwentna and Yentna Rivers. The checkpoint is located at Joe and Norma Delia's log home, also known as the Post Office. There is a store and very limited lodging nearby.

Distance to Nome: 892 miles



FINGER LAKE

Population: 2

In the heart of the snow country, here it is not uncommon to have 10 feet of snow on the ground. The checkpoint is at Winter Lake Lodge. From Finger Lake, the mushers begin the long climb to Rainy Pass.

Distance to Nome: 852 miles



RAINY PASS

Population: 2

On Puntilla Lake in the heart of the Alaska Range, the checkpoint is located at Rainy Pass Lodge, the guiding operation of the Perrins Family. The lodge is open for food, fuel and lodging throughout the winter. From here the trail crosses Rainy Pass itself, the highest point on the Iditarod.

Distance to Nome: 822 miles



ROHN

Population: 0

Situated near the confluence of the South Fork of the Kuskokwim and Tatina Rivers, the area served as one of the original Iditarod Trail Roadhouses for the dog teams carrying mail, etc. The actual roadhouse is gone, so the checkpoint is a cabin built in the 1930's.

Distance to Nome: 787 miles



NIKOLAI

Population: 125

This is the first of many Native villages along the Iditarod Trail. The checkpoint is located in the Community Hall.

Distance to Nome: 712 miles



MCGRATH

Population: 479

Located near the confluence of the Kuskokwim and Takotna Rivers, this thriving community has two stores and a restaurant. The first musher in McGrath receives the PenAir “Spirit of the Iditarod” award.

Distance to Nome: 664 miles



TAKOTNA

Population: 51

Situated on the banks of the Takotna River, this town has a store and a restaurant, and folks in Takotna make lots of pies for the mushers to enjoy. This is one of the smallest towns with one of the biggest welcomes.

Distance to Nome: 646 miles



OPHIR

Population: 0

Now a ghost town, it took its name in 1908 from a nearby placer creek, one of a dozen streams in Alaska to be named by Bible-reading prospectors, for the lost country of Ophir, the source of King Solomon's gold. Many items and artifacts still remain untouched. The checkpoint is at Dick and Audra Forsgren's cabin.

Distance to Nome: 623 miles



CRIPPLE

Population: 0

Part of the famous Iditarod Mining District which saw \$35 million in gold taken out of the area between 1908 and 1925. Not bad when you figure that gold was only worth \$20 an ounce in those days. This checkpoint marks the “official” halfway point in the race for the northern route, signified by the halfway trophy and \$3,000 in gold nuggets to the first musher to reach the checkpoint.

Distance to Nome: 550 miles



RUBY

Population: 187

The first checkpoint on the famous Yukon River, the longest river in Alaska, stretching 1,875 miles. Gold was discovered here in 1907. Ruby was home for many of the mushers who carried mail. Dog team mail ended here in 1931. The checkpoint is in the community hall. Iditarod sponsor, the Millennium Alaskan Hotel Anchorage awards the first musher into Ruby a gourmet dinner and a cash prize.

Distance to Nome: 480 miles



GALENA

Population: 527

Galena derived its name from lead sulfate ore found in the area, known chemically as galena. The town was founded in 1920 when Natives moved down river from the old town site of Loudon because of the availability of firewood. A man could cut 250 cords a winter and sell it for \$8.00 a cord to the stern wheelers that worked the rivers in the summer. The checkpoint is at the “old” community hall downtown.

Distance to Nome: 430 miles



NULATO

Population: 359

Originally founded in 1838 at the confluence of the Nulato and Yukon Rivers, Nulato was a Russian trading post. Without a stockade, the Indians promptly burned it down. In 1841, the Russian American Company rebuilt the trading post consisting of seven log buildings, but again without a stockade. In 1851, the Koyukan Indians again burned it down and killed most of the inhabitants. In 1853, the trading post was rebuilt at the present town site, two miles upriver from the old site. The checkpoint is the community hall.

Distance to Nome: 393 miles



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KALTAG

Population: 234

This town signals a brief respite from the driving winds as the trail from here leads overland through Kaltag Portage to the coast of Norton Sound where the winds take on new meaning.

Distance to Nome: 346 miles



UNALAKLEET

Population: 882

Situated on the coast of Norton Sound, just north of the Unalakleet River, this village is the largest community on the Iditarod Trail between Wasilla and Nome. The trail is now entering the gateway to the Bering Sea and from here on the mushers can expect sudden storms and an ample supply of wind. The checkpoint is in front of the AC store.

Distance to Nome: 261 miles



SHAKTOOLIK

Population: 199

One look down the street at the snowdrifts will tell you this is one of the windiest stretches of the trail. From here the trail continues overland for a short distance, then leads the mushers out onto the ice of Norton Bay, one of the most treacherous segments of trail that the musher may have to contend with.

Distance to Nome: 221 miles



KOYUK

Population: 258

Once this checkpoint is reached, the mushers can breath a sigh of relief as almost all of the rest of the trail is at least over land.

Distance to Nome: 171 miles



ELIM

Population: 281

If the weather is bad, the trip over the mountain can be a long, hard one because it is almost all above timberline and exposed to the wind. The trail over Little McKinley can range from icy and windswept to soft and punchy.

Distance to Nome: 123 miles



GOLOVIN

Population: 148

You'll leave Golovin directly onto the ice of Golovin Lagoon. The trail will usually be hard, fast, and straight. During the day you will see a group of hills to the northwest; White Mountain is on the left edge of the hills on the Fish River. There is no checkpoint in Golovin, and mushers do not send drop bags here.

Distance to Nome: 95 miles



WHITE MOUNTAIN

Population: 209

Just 77 miles from Nome, this village is located on the banks of the Fish River. It takes its name from that of a nearby mountain. This can be one of the most dangerous stretches on the race when the wind blows or a storm hits.

Distance to Nome: 77 miles



SAFETY

The last checkpoint before Nome, just 22 miles away. Here the mushers are on the coast of the Bering Sea and travel on the beach most of the way to Nome.

Distance to Nome: 22 miles



NOME

Population: 3576



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