

Alaska Trip May 26-June 14, 2018

Saturday, May 26

Up at 6:30. We are pretty well packed and have a pretty relaxing send-off. Get to the Marriott, drop the bags, and drop the car at UC. I didn't have to run back to the hotel. There was an accident holding up traffic on I-71/75 south; so driver takes us over I-471 to airport. Check bags, get through security, by lunch and get on plane. Take off a bit late (Chicago air traffic hold) but still get in early. Long walk to Seattle flight. It is a bit late too. The flight is about four hours. We have no problem getting our luggage and getting picked up by the hotel. Decide to go out for a glass of wine. There is not much around hotel, but find a small casino which has a lounge. Sit at the bar and have our wine. Split a pork dinner with fried plantains. It was good. Walk back to the hotel and crash.

Sunday, May 27

Pack and eat breakfast at the hotel. Actually catch the airport shuttle ½ an hour early. Check our bags and getting through security was easy. Get on plane for Alaska!!!



Easy flight too. Eat airport purchased lunch on board. Arrive in Sitka a little late. Sitka has a very small airport. It is amazing that they can get big planes in. Get our luggage and give it to the cruise people. Get on one of the three buses. We were expecting the approximately fifteen that had signed up for the Betchart tour. Instead there are about 100 people from Lindblat/National Geographic including us. We were quite surprised.

Sitka is quite small. We see most of it. First stop is the Russian Orthodox Cathedral. Then we go to the rapture hospital. The first stop is the bald eagle flight cage. There are about 6-8 eagles relearning how to fly and hunt in a long cage. Hear about the rapture center in a presentation which includes presentation of an immature bald eagle. At the front desk are a northern pigmy owl and a northern saw-whet owl. Outside we see a couple more bald eagles (nesting on the ground), a golden eagle, various owls, a red-tailed hawk which had almost black coloring, a goshawk, and a peregrine falcon. Back on the bus to the Sitka National Historical Park where there we a zillion totem poles and various masks, shawls, and carvings from the various indigenous people of the area. Back on the bus to town center. We are given time to look around town, but spend it in the town center eating snacks.



Finally we head for the boat and board. After a safety drill, we have a champagne reception with introductions of the staff and a buffet dinner. After dinner we walk the sundeck looking for animals and see none.

At dinner, the boat shoves off and motors to a bay where we anchor for the night.

Monday, May 28 – Hanus Bay

Spend the morning and early afternoon cruising. Anchor at B?? Island and take our first Zodiac cruise with a wet landing. It wasn't bad. Take the moderate hike. The hiking part was pretty quick with stops for ecology talks. Took many pictures of flowers. We get cold and wet as we wait for Zodiac on the way back, but these is hot cider with Grand Mariner waiting for us on the boat. Peel off wet clothes and go to talk about ravens. Follow that with dinner and a disorganized talk about rain forest ecology.

Red Breasted Sapsucker
Bald eagles (from Zodiac and on hike)
Pelagic Cormorant
Glaucous (-winged?) Gull
White headed merganser

Salmon berry
Deer lily- false lily of the valley
Western buttercup
Rosy twisted stalk
Shooting star
Early blueberry
Bog bunch berry
Skunk Cabbage
Western rattlesnake plantain seedpods

Sitka spruce
Western hemlock

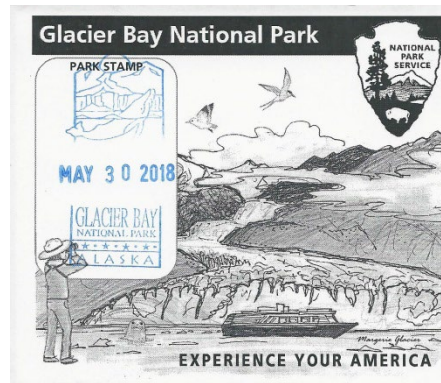
Tuesday, May 29 – George Island (morning), Inian Islands (afternoon – Zodiac)

Come into a cove on George Island. The scenery is spectacular! As we pull in through the straight we see a humped back whale.

Beautiful outing weather! Sunshine. Zodiac to the island and hike to a World War II gun turret. At the beginning of the walk, we see false hellebore plant (no flowers). Randy kayaks in the bay while Jan goes on another hike. Randy sees a tufted puffin around the end of the island (in opening that looks out into the Alaska Sea). Get to see sea otters on the trip back to the boat. In the afternoon, do a little laundry and then take another Zodiac tour (no landing this time). See a number of whale spouts and one fluke on the way in. See a plethora of bald eagles (both mature and immature), a pull-out for stellar sea lions, harbor porpoises, and more sea otters. The trip was chilly, but there was mulled wine as a reward when we returned. After dinner, we had a lecture on seals, sea lions and sea otters. A bear was spotted on the shore. After finding it in the spotting scope, we were able to spot it with our binoculars. It was a mother and a cub.

Humped backed whales (spout, fins and fluke)
Tufted puffin
Pigeon guillemot
Sea Otter (first one spotted by Jan, then many others)

Stellar sea lions
Bald eagles
Harbor porpoises
Pelagic cormorant



Wednesday, May 30 – Glacier Bay National Park

We motor up Glacier Bay. Passing South Marble Island, we see sea lions and both tufted and horned puffins. Now I've seen all three puffins. They are all cute. On shore we see a grizzly bear (brown bear) and a moose. Well, the moose was mostly swimming along the shore. So far away that we couldn't practically see him with the binoculars let alone get a picture of him. Passing Gloomy Knob we see mountain goats with their kids. See harbor seals along the way.

After lunch we arrive at Margorie Glacier. We see it calve several times and hear the "boom" a couple of seconds later. Next to it was the big Grand Pacific Glacier with a rocky "moraine" in front of it. On way out of Tarr Inlet see both harbor seals and harbor porpoises. Sea otters are very common with their pups on their bellies. See seals pulled out on the calved glacier icebergs. The killer whales don't come near the glaciers (hypothesis: water is too noisy for them with all of the popping bubbles from the frozen bergs).

Motor into the John Hopkins Inlet and see the John Hopkins Glacier. Can't go too close because of the seals having their pups. Come out and go to Reid Glacier. Motor back to Bartlett Cove having dinner along the way. Disembark onto a dock, have a group picture for Betchart and start off on a walk by ourselves. Turn around and walk back along the road. Find a porcupine grazing along the side of the road. Meet up with a group from the boat. Take the forest trail through the woods and come back to the boat for dessert.

Moose
Brown bear (grizzly)
Sea otters (lots with pups)
Harbor seal
Harbor porpoise
Stellar sea lion
Mountain goats (billy, nanny, and kids)
Porcupine

Horned puffin
Tufted puffin
Golden eyed duck
Harlequin duck
Surf Scoter
Red throated loon
Pelagic cormorant
Parasitic jaeger
Bald eagle
Pigeon guillemot
Artic tern
Hermit thrush

Baneberry

Thursday, May 31

Early morning call for humpback whale watching. See a couple of pods. See several flukes and one breach (far off). Saw harbor porpoises during breakfast (others saw them during the whale watching). Take a three hour walk in the morning. See a bald eagle early on the hike. Going out we see a bear across the lake. A river otter crosses the trail in front of us. Many wildflowers are in bloom in the large wet meadow and we take many wildflower pictures. On the way back, see a mother and three cubs.

See another bear with cub along the shore as we cruise in the afternoon.

River otter
Brown bear
Bald eagle

Lady fern
Early blueberry (*Vaccinium ovalifolium*)
Alaskan violet (*Viola langsдорфii*)
Stream violet (*Viola glabella*)
Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*)
Cow parsnips (*Heracleum lanatum*)
Mountain ash (*Sorbus sitchensis*)
Chocolate lily (*Fritillaria camschatcensis*)
Starflower (*Trientalis europea*)
Marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*)
Western buttercup (*Ranunculus occidentalis*)
Red Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja miniata*)
Shooting star (*Dodecatheon pulchellum*)

Friday, June 1

Early morning trip into the icebergs calving off of LeConte Galcier. Seals on ice flows. Iceberg have a fantastic blue color. Back on the boat for brunch. Boat back to Petersburg, a Norse community. Zodiac across the bay and take a bog walk. Skunk cabbage (theirs – not ours) is huge. Rosy twisted stem

is in full bloom as is the bunchberry. Back on the boat, we have an all-you-can-eat crab and rib dinner with local beer.

Harbor seal
Pigeon guillemot
Marbled murrelet
Nootka lupine (*Lupinus nootkatensis*)

Skunk cabbage
Bog rosemary
Bog laurel
Laborador tea
Bog bean
Huckleberry (upright berries?)
Matchstick lichen
Feather moss
Feather grass (?)
Bush with small flower in stem ???
Three leaved gold thread
Step moss
Reindeer lichen

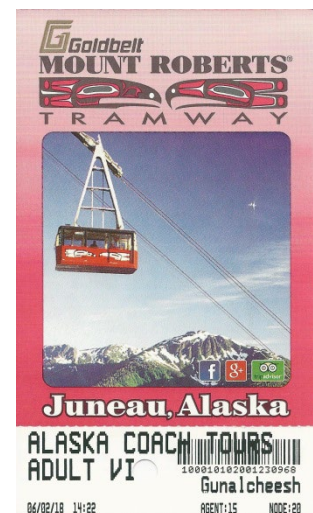
Saturday, June 2

Zodiac ride up Tracy Arm to the mouth of the South Sawyer Galcier. On the way up see beautiful stone walls that Muir labelled "a second Yosemite." See a calve event just as we get up there and a lot of ice in the arm. Have hot chocolate and peppermint schnapps in the Zodiac. See harbor seals on the flows and mountain goats way up the hills.

Zodiac back to the boat for lunch and disembarkment instructions. Dall's porpoises spotted off the bow. They seem to be racing the boat or surfing on the bow wave. Photo show of guests photographs. I had entered hermit thrush and chocolate lily but they were not presented. Applause for the crew. Then final dinner – salmon (how appropriate). Whales off the bow. They stay there for about a half an hour, surfacing, raising their tail and a couple of breaches. Wildlife Jeopardy followed and then packing and bed.

Sunday, June 3

Up at 6:00. Go through morning routine and finish packing. Bags out at 7:00 and then down to breakfast. Back to room and then disembark. Take gondola up to the top of Juneau's mountain (Mt. Fairbanks). Quickly look at view. Then back down and off to the Alaska Museum. they have a very nice Native American section. Wee rush through the sections that deal with the arrival of the Russians through statehood. Back to the port for our box lunches (all of the few gluten free lunches were gone by the time Jan and I got there). Quickly walk down to the Juneau Trading Post and look at the upstairs art section. Aisles are really stuffed. There is not much that we were interested in. The back to the bus and off to the airport. Our luggage is already there. Get in lines for a baggage tag, baggage check, and security.



Get to the boarding area just as people are getting on the plane, but we make it. Everything was just too rushed this morning.

Arrive in Anchorage and take a taxi to hotel. We start to shop in the downtown area but hear about a market near our hotel. Go through that enjoying but not buying. Lots of knives made out of antlers. Some art. Buy some cashew brittle. Boy was it good. Go to Ptarmigan Pizza for dinner and split a gluten free pizza. Stop at a very popular ice cream stand next door (line out the front door). Very unique flavors.

Monday, June 4

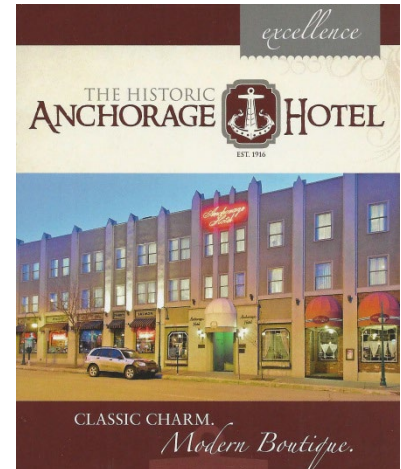
This is our day in the Anchorage area. Start by going to Earthquake Park. See where the hillside slide into Cook Inlet in the 1984 earthquake. See sand hill cranes on the beach and see a snipe on a fence post. Then go to Potter Marsh for some bird watching. Wind is blowing and we get very cold. Head for Portage Glacier with a stop for Dall sheep and some flowers. Don't see any sheep but Photograph lots of flowers. Go to Glacier Visitor's Center. Nice lake with a glacier coming into it. Cannot see Portage Glacier (it has retreated too far) or another glacier around the bend. Stop at Artic Wildlife Conservation Center. (This is another animal rescue center). Drive back again stopping along Turnagain Arm (hoping again to see sheep but no luck) and again at Potter Marsh (the other end this time). See artic terns on their nests. Back in Anchorage, we go to the "Glacier Brewhouse" for dinner. (I had suggested that last night, but we had opted for pizza instead. Good thing.) Very popular and noisy. We get a private room. Good thing! Go home and do some wash. Get to bed early again.

Three toothed Saxifrage
Nootka lupine
Sitka burnet
Mouse ear chickweed
Beach pea
Northern Jacob's Ladder
Western dog violet
Bearberry, knikknik

Arctic tern
Snipe
Sandhill crane
Bald eagle
Mountain goat
Trumpeter swan
Red neck grebe
American wigeon
Greater Scaup
Alder flycatcher

At the Artic Wildlife Conservation Center:

Brown bear (grizzly)
Black bear
Muskox



Wolves
Caribou
Moose
Elk
Porcupine

Tuesday, June 5

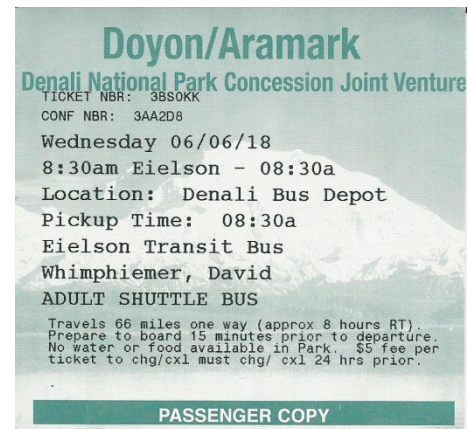
Get up early and leave Anchorage at 7:00. Drive to Denali seeing a number of moose along the way including a mother and her kid. There were two great views of Denali on the way up. Eat lunch outside the park at a pizza joint which has a gluten free crust. Go to rafting outfitters and get into dry suits (quite a production). When I sat in the raft, I felt like a marshmallow until I pulled open the neck and let some air out. The river was a class III river, but our boatman kept us out of the really rough stuff. There was splashing though and it was cold. We survived and had a hot drink at the end. We saw Dall sheep way up the hill which just looked like little white blobs. On the way back we went into the visitor center area and see a moose in the trees along the road. We order Subways for tomorrow (they have a gluten free bun for Jan!). Dinner was outside the park. It was a delicious salmon dinner with lemon sauce for me and ginger sauce for Jan. Back at the hotel, we go to bed early (9:30).

Moose
Dall sheep
Northern wood thrush
Alder flycatcher

Wednesday, June 6 – Denali day

Wake up early (5:30) to hit the road at 6:30. Head for breakfast across the street and then to Denali National Park. We pick up our subways along the way. Catch the 8:30 bus into the park at the us station. It is a four hour bus ride through the spruce forest and up into the tundra. See Denali from two stops and a bit of it from the end of the line. On the way out, we see Dall sheep (they look a lot like mountain goats), caribou, three brown bear way off (they look like moving golden blobs on the landscape), and an arctic fox. Also see snowshoe rabbit, ground squirrels, and a ptarmigan. Others saw a wolverine, marmot, and a golden eagle, but we did not. At the far visitor's center we got out and took flower pictures until it started to rain at which time we got back on the bus. On the way back, we got out near the park road pass and hiked along the road for about an hour taking flower pictures along the way. We flagged down the next bus which had room for only five of us. David and Georgiana stayed behind. On the way back we saw Dall sheep and caribou again along with two bull moose (on out in the open and one back in the woods). We have a foul up getting together after the bus ride but it worked itself out. On the way back to the motel, we do see a golden eagle. Dinner was at "The Perch" which Jan worried was a fish fry but actually referred to the location and not the menu. We had grilled and curried chicken. Then back to the room and to bed early.

Thursday, June 7



Up early (5:45) again – this is becoming very regular. After breakfast, we head for the park again to see the dog sled teams and visit the visitor’s center. On the way to the park, we see another moose. After seeing the dogs, a moose and two calves block the trail on the way out. At the visitor’s center we watch a movie with little narration and beautiful photography.

Get in van and drive to Fairbanks. Stop for lunch at the Cookie Factory. Randy has a burger and Jan has Chicken salad. Go to a large animal research station and see muskoxen (male, female and calf) and reindeer (caribou). Jan buys a muskox wool hat. Go see the Alaskan pipeline. Not very exciting. It looks exactly like it does in pictures. Check into the hotel – really big rooms with kitchen and living room.

Friday, June 8

The morning was devoted to two lectures at the University of Alaska Geophysical Institute: the first was about the aoura borealis and the second about a man who walked the Alaskan pipeline. The first was very interesting; the second lacked content. After that we went to the museum for lunch. Prepared sandwiches and quinoa salad. After all of the great food, this was a bit of a disappointment. After lunch, we explored the museum. Upstairs was the art collection. It was very much a like university collection – representative examples of local art. There were some very nice baskets. Downstairs was a natural history/history collection which was much more interesting.

After the museum, we visit the Creamery Pond. This is a former dairy but now is a feeding place for sandhill cranes. We see the cranes plus some ducks. After a ride through downtown Fairbanks, we head back to the hotel. We rest a bit and pack a bit. We have lost Jan’s binocular case but later find it in the van. We then head off for dinner at the Salmon Bake at the Pioneer Village. The Bake includes as much as you can eat salmon (grilled right in front of you), prime rib, and deep fried cod plus salads, sides and desserts. It made up for lunch. After dinner, we walked through the village. It was basically old log cabins moved in from other places in town and turned into shops. Buy a board with “Advice from a moose” for Becky and Cole.

The next highlight of the night was a vaudeville show at the Old Palace Theater. It was very entertaining and a great way to end the Alaska portion of the tour.

Back to the hotel. A bit of washing and packing and then into bed for a short night’s sleep.



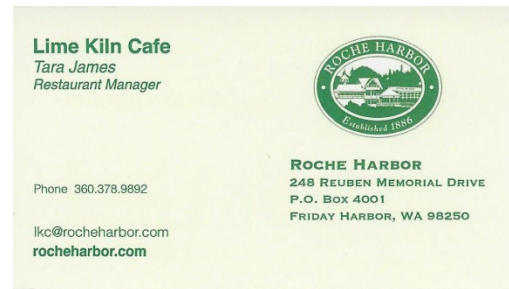
Saturday, June 9

Up very early to catch a 6:00 am plane. The cab picks us up at 4:30. Alaska airlines asks you to ticket your own bags. Then there is a huge line to check the ticketed bags. Get through OK. Head for security where there is a very short line. Again, they have a problem with my medicine bag. Finally get through and get to the boarding area just as they start boarding. The flight is relatively calm. Get luggage and proceed to car rental. It is a pleasure to go directly to the cars at Alamo. Follow Google Maps to Anacortes experiencing no problems. Find the main parking lot at the ferry full. Go to the upper lot where there are spaces. Go down to upload the luggage and change boots. Find we have parked in an employee’s spot. Jan stays with luggage while Randy drives off to find a spot. Luckily finds a spot in the first parking lot.

Ferry is an hour late, but we don't have a problem getting on. Meet Dick Coffey at the ferry dock and Penny as soon as we get to the condo. What a cute dog. she gets a lot of loving for our entire time there. Dick makes a wonderful sweet and sour pork and a mango chicken dinner for us. We hit the bed early because of our very early rise.

Sunday, June 10

After an oatmeal breakfast we tour the island. First to Mt. Grant, the highest point on San Juan Island where we can see off to Vancouver Island. Next to British Camp where the British soldiers were stationed during the "pig war" which wasn't a war at all. Then to Roche Harbor to look around at the resort there and have lunch. Next stop was Lime Kiln State Park where we looked for Orcas (no luck, the salmon numbers had crashed and there was nothing for them to feed on) and where Jan spotted a harbor seal. Final stop was "American Camp" where the US garrisoned during the "Pig War." The joint occupation of San Juan was during the American Civil War and, needless to say, the US had little interest in the "conflict." The garrison was down to six individuals at one time. The Germans were finally brought in to arbitrate the dispute and decide that the island belonged to the US. The British respected that decision and withdrew in 1872. At the south end of the US Historical Park was a grassy field where we saw bunnies and two red foxes.



We took Penny home and went to a new restaurant in town, Mr. Unbelievable's. Food was OK but there weren't many patrons for a Sunday night with entertainment. Go back to the condo, play with Penny for a bit and then go to bed.

Monday, June 11

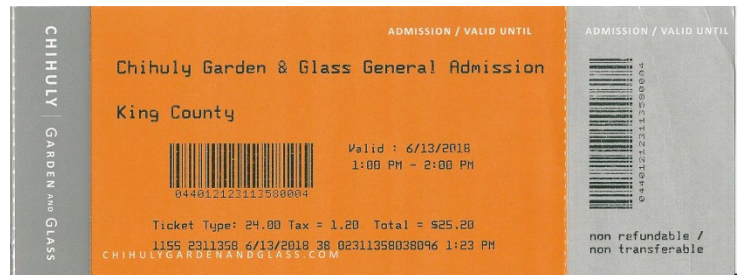
Up at a reasonable hour (7:30) finally, have breakfast, and say goodbye to Penny. Dick takes us to the ferry dock and we get on the ferry. Ferry is about one half an hour late, but we get off. Land about 12:45. We get to the car without any trouble, have a quick lunch at McDonalds, and head for Scott's house. We get there without any trouble (oh, well, we missed one turn after a gas station stop but Google maps figures out another way). What a big, luxurious house!!! You can see Mt. Rainier from the deck. Claudi makes a nice chicken and rice dinner. We talk and watch "Over Washington." Then to bed.

Tuesday, June 12 – Mt. Rainier Day

Up at a reasonable hour and breakfast with the Baumanns. take the two hour drive with to Mt. Rainier National Park. In the park we stop at three places looking for waterfalls: The first is a trailhead with no falls visible, the second is a small, fast moving creek that passes under the road, and the third is the one I remember, the falls starts beside the road and goes down. There is a short walk to the overlook and a gorgeous waterfalls. At the trailhead we find some western white trillium. We continue up to Paradise (the starting point for the trails up and on the tundra regions of Mt. Rainier). All of the trails are snow covered. We have lunch, see the movie, and look around the visitor's center. We then go twenty feet up onto the snow so that we can say that we were there. We drive back down the mountain taking the scenic loop on the way down. There is a nice view of the mountain there and several overlooks of the valley beside. Back at the subdivision, we have a nice meal at the clubhouse. We do electronics until we head for bed.

Wednesday, June 13 – Explore Seattle Day

Short journal entry for today, but an excellent day not the less. After breakfast we go to Pike Street market. It takes a while to get there. Market has an eclectic mix of flower shops, craft shops and restaurants. One fish market is famous for throwing fishes back and forth. We see them do that. It was a very enjoyable wander. We take the monorail to Seattle Center where the space needle is. We had wanted to go up in the needle and to the Chihuly Gardens, but we find that we would have to wait for an hour and a half to go up. We decide to eat in the Armory (now a big food court) and go just to the gardens. It was wonderful showing his progression from various fabrics and small glass pieces to these great big pieces and installations. Take the Monorail back to the market area and get caught in the five block walk from the end to the market. This is Seattle after all. We need the attendant's help to get out of the parking lot. Stop at the Museum of Flight (where Scott is a docent) on the way home. Scott escorts us around in a very quick tour. (Big place, little time before closing.) Stop at a restaurant on the way home. Say goodbye to Scott and Claudi (we are leaving at 6:00 tomorrow morning), pack and go to bed.



Thursday, June 14

Up at 5:00 (luckily, it 8:00 Cincinnati time) and out at 6:30. Google takes us to the airport without going on I-5 at all. Car return, bus to airport, baggage check and security all go smoothly. We are at gate at 8:00 for a 9:05 flight. Flight pushes back 5 minutes early and we get into Houston 20 minutes early. get sandwiches and go to gate. Board on time but our flight has maintenance problems. They switch us to another plane (luckily they had one available) and we are off 1 ½ hours late.

Executive limo has been watching our progress and is still there for us. Van drops us off at the UC parking lot with our luggage and we drive home.