

Alaska Journal – July 2024

By Mark Klein



From July 2nd through July 19th Mark, Becky, and Austin took a wonderful trip to explore Alaska. The first week was spent inland taking long bus rides exploring various state and National Parks and the second week we took a cruise down the Alaskan coast viewing Glaciers and touring several of the unique port cities. There were wildfires around the Denali entrance closing Denali National Park, which cancelled two days of our planned adventure in the Park including an inbound train ride and an ATV 4 wheel adventure! That was a big disappointment. We discovered an Alaskan beer, “Alaskan Brewing Company White” that we drank a lot of throughout the trip. Visual sights along the way included a multitude of beautiful cloud covered and snow white streaked mountain ranges. I also was amazed at the remoteness of the state as most areas we travelled through had little to no people living there. Those people that did live there were very self-sustaining, do-it-yourself, kind of people. Unique spire-like Sitka Spruce trees dominated the landscape and in many areas we saw clumps of standing dead spruce trees due to the spruce beetle. Huge waterfalls and mountains of every color and several lush green Glacier-made valleys took your breath away! The rivers were full of Salmon running during our trip, maybe that was why we saw so many Bald Eagles! We were blessed to see many wild animals listed below but unfortunately (or fortunately!) we didn’t see any bears! Lastly, the numerous (at least 16) magnificent huge glaciers we saw and heard literally dwarfed believability!

Unique nuggets and differences between AK and Lower 48.

- In Alaska they call snowmobiles “Snow Machines”.
- Potholes are called Frosties (due to road freezing and thawing out?)
- Info Nugget: If a river name ends in “NA” then it has, or once had, Salmon in it.

Trip Summary:

- National Parks / State Parks visited:
 - Kenai Fjords National Park
 - Denali State Park (National Park was closed due to fire near visitor center/park entrance)
 - Wrangel-St. Elias National Park – Largest National Park in the Country.
 - Glacier Bay National Park – Accessible only via boats!

- Glaciers viewed:
 - Matanuska Glacier - (Day 4, Day 7) – Big, White, land based
 - Worthington Glacier - (Day 5) – Viewed from a distance, beautiful blue hues. Land based.
 - Kennicott Glacier – (Day 6) Big, brown/gray, dirty silt covered
 - Root Glacier – (Day 6) White, viewed from a distance
 - Tolsona Glacier – (Day 7) Viewed from a distance
 - Portage Glacier – (Day 7) – On entrance to Kenai Peninsula, big and white
 - Hubbard Glacier – (Day 10)
 - Turner Glacier - (Day 10) – One of the few glaciers advancing in North America
 - Margerie Glacier – (Day 11) – Heard thunder before calving. Mom just missed it!
 - Reid Glacier – (Day 11)
 - Lamplugh Glacier – (Day 11) – Kinda a dirty blue
 - Grand Pacific Glacier – (Day 11) – Dirty/Muddy
 - Johns Hopkin Glacier – (Day 11)
 - “Klein” Glacier – (Day 11) Possibly Hounah or Gillman?, saw it high in the mountains.
 - Davidson Glacier – (Day 12) – Valley Glacier, Canoe trip in drizzle to see it..
 - Mendenhall Glacier – (Day 13) – Nugget falls right beside it was super impressive!
- Wild Animals encountered:
 - Momma Moose and Two Babies (Day 2); Bull Moose, Female Moose (Day 6)
 - Spruce Grouse and several Babies (Day 6)
 - Beaver swimming next to his Dam (Day 6)
 - Eagles – Many! (Day 6, 8, 13)
 - Two baby Ducks (Day 6)
 - Harbor Seals (Day 8, 11),
 - Puffin (Day 8)
 - Sea Lions (Day 8)
 - Porpoise – (Day 8)
 - Fin Whale and Humpback Whale (Mom and baby) (Day 8, 13)
 - Lots of Rafts of Sea Otters leisurely floating by on their backs. (Day 11, 12)
- Flora viewed:
 - Fire Weed – Pretty purple/pink flowers on almost all roadsides!
 - Cauliflower type plant that you should not touch!
 - Forget Me Not (Alaska State Flower) small blooms with pretty blue flowers with white/yellow center dots.
 - Monk’s Hood,/Wolf Bane, Whale Harpoons
 - Sitka Spruce trees – Tall pillar in shape with twisted branches. Saw lots of dead ones due to the Spruce Beetle.
- Cities visited: Anchorage, McKinley, Copper, Valdez, Kennicott, Palmer, Seward, Kenai, Whittier, Skagway, Vancouver CAN
 - A running joke (truth) is that all small tourist towns in AK contain 90% jewelry stores on Main St.
- Icebergs
 - Growler – Tip is < 3 feet in Height and <16 feet in Length
 - Bergy Bit – Tip is 3-13 feet in Height and 15-46 feet in Length
 - Iceberg (Small, Medium, Large, Very Large) – tip is 14- >240 ft in Height, 47- >670 ft in Length

Tues July 2. Day 1 – Travel Day from Atlanta to Anchorage - Cloudy

- Delta Flight from ATL was 7 hours long and uneventful thanks to Delta Comfort Plus (extra legroom).



- Dad's snack bag was at first poo-pooed, but later he was redeemed!
- There is a 4 hr time difference between AK and GA! Mark had a bit of jet lag after returning to GA.
- The days are long in Alaska!! Sunup 4:05 AM; Sunset 12:10am (Need good drapes!)
- A bus Transferred us to Captain Hook Hotel in downtown Anchorage. Zack the comedian bus driver kept us entertained. "Here we have the longest stoplight in Anchorage!"
- Mark asked Princess travel desk in hotel about our itinerary due to the fire and Denali closing. Any Changes? The initial agent told me our trip was cancelled and we'd need to find a new hotel (!!!!). Mark escalated to a manager and when he looked on the system properly he said we are all good! Whew!
- We tested Alaskan White beer in hotel bar and liked it! We had this same beer throughout the trip.
- In the morning we were officially told the Denali part of our trip (2 days) was cancelled and to stay tuned for more updates on our new itinerary.

Wed July 3. Day 2 – Coach Travel to Mt. McKinley Princess Wilderness Lodge – Cloudy

- Took coach from Anchorage hotel to Mt. McKinley Princess Lodge;



- 9:30am – 12:15;
- We had a very good bus driver/guide – Barbara. She was to be with us throughout our land based tour.
 - While driving, “Moose on the left!” was heard and female moose was seen! Barbara also called out several time flying eagles that no one really saw from the moving bus.
- The Denali portion of the trip was officially cancelled with this change: They added +1 days to McKinley and +1 days to Copper.
- Along the way the Denali mountain peeked out literally for about 1 second as viewed through the front window of the bus. Mark saw the upper third of totally white capped Denali Mountain through the front windshield of the bus. It is the tallest mountain in North America! Due to constant clouds only 20% of visitors ever see the mountain.
- The Princess Lodge was very rustic and scenic with (non)view of cloud covered Mt. McKinley out back.
 - Food was expensive in the lodges restaurants and not many vegan options.
- Becky and Austin took a tree house trail/talk about birds which was not very interesting.
- Good pics of pretty Fire Weed. That stuff is everywhere!
- Took “Wilderness Gold Panning Adventure” tour;



- Tour overall was 4.5 hours. Minimal bathroom access.
- Once we got from our hotel lodge to his house/office in his van we consolidated with a few other folks and he outfitted us with rubber boots, pans, and shovels! Set expectations that we were NOT going to be rich after this tour!
- We drove 45min-1hr to Peters creek and on the way there we saw a Momma Moose and her two babies in the far end of a field.



- Peters creek had a rocky river bed, clear water, shallow, swift running, and pretty.
- Our guides were Richard (ex Marine) and Jason (ex Army Paratrooper) the chatty redneck 2+yr transplant from North Texas. He was packing heat, a 45mm (in case of bears I guess)! "Can of Dip"?
- Richard was very specific about not being a "Miner". He was a "Prospector"! Miners lie!
- Overall prospecting tip: Look for big rocks on the inner bend of the river. Use the dirt around those big rocks to find gold.
- Richard and Jason were very helpful with panning technique and especially when we got to the last bit of material in our pans to highlight the tiny gold specs.
- We transferred the tiny specs into small glass vials. He was right we were not rich!
- Afterwards, at Richard home, they cooked up hotdogs for us (me).
- Poor Richard suffered thru a hand injury and drove mostly one handed back to the Princess lodge.



Thursday July 4. Day 3 – Nature Activity at Mt. Mckinley Princess Lodge - Cloudy

- 10:00 am - Nature Talk about Birds at treehouse



- 11:00 am – Nature Talk about Bears at Hudson auditorium near the Airplane.
 - Do not run from them!! (Unless you have a safe place to run to!)
 - Brown Bear
 - Sometimes called Grizzly Bears, Bigger, Neck Hump, Bigger Paws
 - Encounter Strategy: Slowly back away, Lay Down, be Passive, do not provoke or threaten
 - Black Bear
 - Smaller, All Colors
 - Encounter Strategy: Fight Back, Make noise
- 1:15pm – Nature talk about Moose
- 2:30pm – Nature Walk on trail behind the lodge
 - Lodge Sign (See pic below) was Mt. Mckinley viewing spot (All we saw was clouds but the mountain, when showing, could be seen at this very spot) 😊 Austin posted a funny pic on Instagram with the mountain sketched in!



- The trail guide knew his plants!! (i.e. every single stinking one!)
- Surprise! It started sprinkling
- Mosquitos pretty bad; Especially vulnerable were Mark's hands and Austin's face.
- Lots of bad plants: Monk's Hood,/Wolf Bane, Whale Harpoons
- Lots of Medicinal plants
- Forget me not flower (State flower of AK) – white center dot = pollinated, yellow center dot = not pollinated, helps the pollinators to conserve energy
- 6:00pm – Wolf talk at the lodges Hudson room.
 - There is an Alpha / Omega Hierarchy among packs.
 - The Guide talked a bit about the successful Wolf re-introduction into Yellowstone
 - Most all wolf packs are familial units
- 21,230 (Height of Mt. McKinley) restaurant for dinner - \$10 bet for 3 diet coke charges. Mark won over Becky! They only charged for one.

Friday July 5. Day 4 – Travel day to Copper Princess lodge – Cloudy with light rain

- 9:45am – 5:00pm – Long bus ride!



- Copper Mtn Princess Wilderness Lodge was nice! Windy! Unfortunately, our room did not face the rear of the lodge with the great mountain view!
- Becky had some sicko people in the row behind her on the bus! Both Becky and Austin had slight lingering coughs on this trip, but no fever and they felt fine.
- Stopped for lunch at Qdoba for burritos and hit the Grocery Store (i.e. more food, drinks, and snacks!)
- Saw lots of pretty copper colored Mountains along the way.
- Stopped at the Matanuska Glacier lookout (it was sprinkling)
- Barbara said at the end of the ride she had permission to take us on a Valdez tour tomorrow!

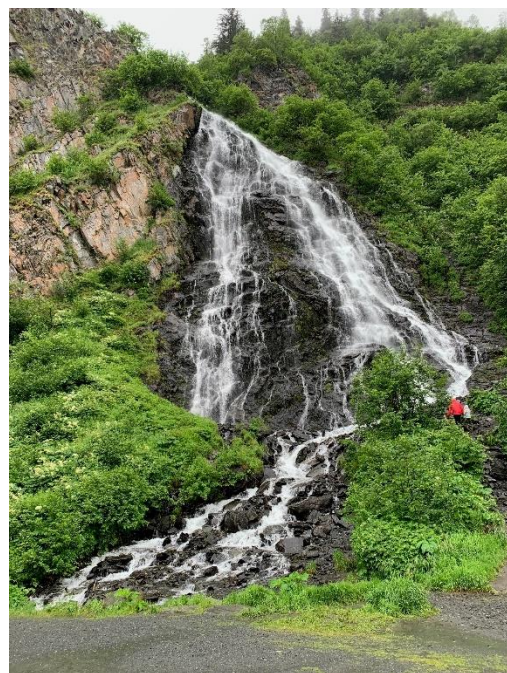


Saturday July 6. Day 5 – Valdez road trip! Cloudy and Light Rain

- 8:30am – 4:45pm – Valdez Bonus trip!!! (Due to Denali closing! 😞)
- It was a leisurely rainy trip with lots of picture stops
- First stop was the Alaskan pipeline!
 - Amazingly we could walk right up and touch it.
 - There are things called “Pigs” that travel inside the pipe to clean up the sludge
 - There is one other major pipeline running thru Alaska.



- We noticed avalanche railroad-like arms along the road to stop traffic if there was a slide blocking the road ahead.
- Learned that it was the season for Salmon to run. They return to their spawning spots every 5-7 years.
- We stopped at two pretty falls along the way!
 - Bridal Fall and Horse Tail Fall



- We saw a beautiful glacier: Worthington. It had pretty blue ice which is due to reflected UV light.



- Valdez history: Captain Cook mapped out Valdez looking for a NW passage.
- Valdez is a small port town and we stopped for a view from a high hill inside the city for a panoramic view.



- It was raining pretty steadily when we got to town on our lunch break and it was miserable looking for food and shopping at the few souvenir stores.
- We had lunch on the pier street with a row of lots of food trucks. Took a bit but we finally found a potato truck (Austin) and a Thai truck (Becky and Mark). We ate outside under cover from the rain and the fries were awesome and the Thai food was good!
- After we returned to the lodge we took a naturalist led nature loop walk at the lodge and mosquitos ate us up! Still too cloudy to see Mount Wrangell (need to verify this name)



Sunday July 7. Day 6 – Kennicott in (Wrangell St. Elias National Park) road trip!!

- 7:20 – 7:40 We took a long road trip to Kennicott which is the only major town in Wrangell St. Elias National Park.
- It was a long, long, long bumpy van ride! Teeth rattler for sure! Gravel road for most of the way. Driver used both sides most of the rides to avoid the numerous pot holes.
- Stopped along the way at Gilahina River crossing wooden bridge with nearby wooden railroad bridge buckling from old age. River was an unappealing milky gray color!
- On the trip we saw lots of animals (some crossing the road ahead of us):
 - Bull Moose, Cow Moose, Spruce Grouse and several of her babies, Beaver Dam with Beaver swimming nearby, Several Eagles begging for salmon from fishermen shore fishing, Two cute little baby ducks.



- We stopped a bit and watched fishermen bank fishing with a net on the end of a long pole walking up and down the riverside. Bald Eagles were nearby looking for scraps.
- Once in Kennicott we saw two glaciers:
 - Kennicott Glacier – Gray and brown. Big and dirty, covered with lots of silt/dirt called moraine or Milt?. Could not see any ice or snow. It has shrunk drastically (top to bottom) over the years referenced by looking at pictures in the info center.
 - Root Glacier – White and within walking distance from the town. We did not take the hike as we were hungry and thought the time risk to make the return trip was not worth it.
- Kennicott town is a rustic town with oldish reddish painted wooden buildings. Many buildings were open for sight seeing but some were privately owned and off limits to tourists.
- We had lunch at the local (only) hotel. It was pretty good. As expected, there was not much of a vegan menu though!

- Copper Mill Tour! The Mill was the main building dominating the town and was very tall with multiple levels traversing up a hill.



- The very interesting tour that walked us top to bottom through the Mill (NOT the copper mines) that processed the raw copper ore.
- Mill was old and run down and built/updated in pieces/sections thru the years. It was fairly obvious inside detecting where new additions were added. Some rooms were heated depending on the work performed but most were not.
- It was hard to get folks to work there, recruiting them was tough!
- Becky did well navigating the steep and scary stairs (vertical submarine stairs were the worst!) inside the Mill as we worked our way meandering from the top to the bottom of the Mill.
- Kennicott was a self sustaining town with doctor and hospital. It used to have a train coming and going but when it stopped running the town became basically deserted with no more Mill work.
- There were good views of the Kennicott and Root glaciers from the top windows of the Mill.



Monday July 8. Day 7 – Travel Day from Copper to Kenai Princess Wilderness Lodge – No Rain

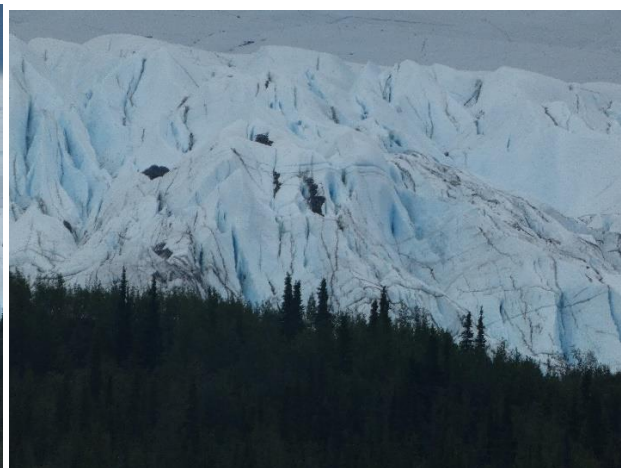
- 8:00 – 4:30 transport from Copper to Kenai Princess Wilderness Lodge



- Viewed Tolsona Glacier from a distance.



- Viewed Matanuska Glacier from the state park viewing area.



- Viewed Portage Glacier on entrance to Kenai Peninsula
- Lunch in Palmer, average café diner with no vegan options.

- Becky bought cool layered soap chunks in the Palmer visitors center
- Saw a Moose briefly on the side of the road during the drive!
- Stopped for a picturesque valley viewing. Think sound of Music!!



- Our Kenai Cabin room was nice, but pretty far from the main lodge.
- Becky and Mark took the 1 mile loop trail behind the lodge down to the Kenai river.
 - The Kenai River was swift moving and a pretty aqua in color!
 - It is a steep trail from lodge to river!! Luckily it had several rest benches for Mark on the steep part for their return trip!
 - At the riverside we saw a momma duck and many babies flushed out and drifting with the strong current. We think another hiker flushed (bad!) them out into the fast moving clear blue river!



Tuesday July 9. Day 8 – Kenai Fjords Nat'l Park Cruise, Cloudy and light rainy

- Bus trip to Seward and once there we boarded Calisto Voyager Catamaran (See docked boat in background picture below) and headed out to Resurrection Bay in the Kenai Fjords Nat'l Park.



- Austin and Mom took a seat on the top deck for optimal viewing and Mark reserved two seats inside. It very quickly became uncomfortable (wet/cold/windy/bouncy) on the exposed upper deck seats as we motored to our destinations and Becky and Austin headed inside. Mark had the last laugh!
- On board the boat we had drinks made with actual Glacier Ice they had scooped out of the Bay!! Ice was very bubbly.
 - Cute drink names: Glacier-Rita, Naughty Otter, Puffin on the Rocks
- Viewed Aialik Glacier! Wow! I mean Wow! Huge and Magnificent.
 - It was obvious when we were getting close to the glacier as there was lots of ice chunks floating in the water
 - It was very calm and quiet as we stopped in front of the Glacier. We heard lots of loud thunder and cracking noises from inside the glacier.
 - We saw 5-6 Calvings as it dropped ice into the sea. Spectacular!





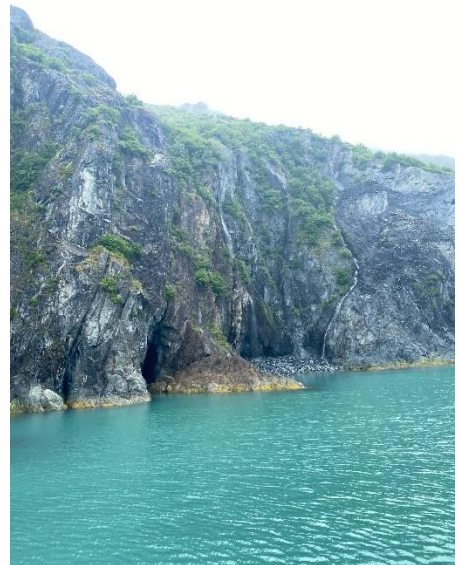
- Animal viewings:
 - A Bald Eagle was majestically posed on dock entrance buoy as we headed out of the dock on our journey. That was a good sign!



- Harbor Seals, Puffin, Sea Lions, Porpoise
- Fin Whale and Humpback Whale (Mom and baby). The Fin whales were feeding and we saw lots of birds hovering above that spot to feed as well! For whale seekers that is an easy clue to locate the whales.



- Misty Spider cove was very pretty and surreal with tree covered rock spires poking out of the water. Looked like something out of Thailand. Lots of animals were seen around this area! Puffins, Sea Lions, Harbor Seals.



Wednesday July 10. Day 9 – Travel Day, Kenai to Whittier and Cruise Ship – Sunny/Cloudy

- Bus ride to Whittier to catch the cruise ship!
 - Viewed the Portage Glacier



- Viewed several glaciers as well before the tunnel



- There was a long delay entering the tunnel which we eventually found to be an ambulance coming out from the opposite direction.
- The 2 mile tunnel to Whittier was narrow, one way only and railroad tracks ran through it in the middle. It was the only land based access Whittier had to other Alaska cities.
- The long tunnel had several emergency stop stations in the middle to be used in case of emergency. The traffic was metered (mostly busses) so as to not overload any one station.

- Cruise Ship – Grand Princess



- The boarding process was very easy! We were among the first people to get on the ship with no lines or waiting. We each had a coin sized digital medallion on a lanyard/necklace we used to verify our identity throughout the cruise (i.e. room entry, boarding/departing, getting drinks, casino,...). It was super nice to have the room door automatically unlock when you approached it.
- We had Room D110 in the forward port (left) side of the ship with an uncovered balcony. We wished it was covered due to all the rain we had.
- Our package included up to 15 free drinks (<\$15 per drink) per day. We never really came close to our limit but nonetheless it was a good deal!



- We saw a magic comedy show and a regular comedy show this evening. Both were good!
- Mark lost \$125 on the casino's automatic holdem table 😞
- We learned that this ship was one of the oldest ones in the Princess Line.

Thursday July 11. Day 10 – Hubbard Glacier! – Misty rain off and on

- Our cruise ship arrived at Hubbard Glacier around 3pm! It was very big and blue and massive!
- We got to within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile which we were told is uncommon!
- A Naturalist came over the ship-wide loud speaker to give running commentary and interesting details.
- It is North America's largest tidewater (reach the ocean) glacier. 76 miles long, 7 miles wide, and 350 feet tall above waterline and 250 feet below the waterline.
- We also saw Turner Glacier directly to the left of Hubbard. It is the white streak in the photo.
- The cruise ship stayed quite a long time and the captain turned the boat so both sides could get a good view of it.



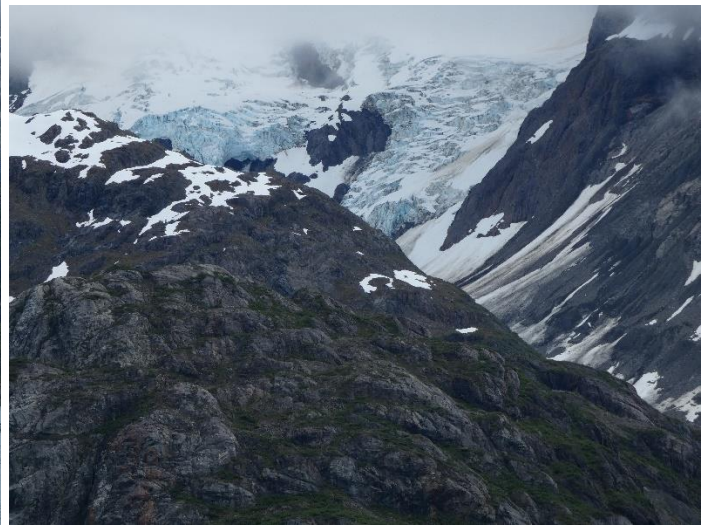


Friday July 12. Day 11 – Glacier Bay National Park – Foggy, Rainy, Partly Cloudy!

- Cruised by lots of Glaciers today! Glacier Bay National Park is loaded with them!
- Reid Glacier –
- Margerie Glacier – We heard cracks of thunder but only one calving. Becky called it as she went off the patio to use the restroom. Lots of birds were heard calling when we were there!
- Grand Pacific Glacier -
- Lamplugh Glacier – Good weather finally! Kinda dirty blue color.
- Johns Hopkins Glacier – Sunny! Yea! This is one of the few advancing glaciers in the bay!
- Klein Glacier (Possibly Hounah or Gillman) – Located high in the mountains. I could not find it on any of our maps so, as discoverer, I named it Klein Glacier!







- Saw harbor seals and tons of otters (one group, called a raft, of otters was easily >20) floating by the cruise ship on our way into the bay.



- Dinner Reservations - Becky and Mark wanted to have a nice quiet sit down dinner every day and check out the new Vegan menus Becky had heard about online. The app and TV both have dinner reservation options for any of the three nice sit-down restaurants. We tried both and could not get a reservation, so we went on to the restaurant and told them we did not have a reservation. They had us wait behind another couple that didn't have a reservation either. After a few minutes they told the couple ahead of us to go to another restaurant as they had no tables. There were plenty of empty tables we could see from our standing spot! When they told us to go away as well Becky pushed back and the head waiter came over and she immediately seated us at a table for two. We were pleased with the service and with the Vegan menu options. Same exact thing happened the next night except they recognized us and immediately seated us at the same table! We assumed that this was the designated complainers/high maintenance table! We noted that this table was unique in that it did not have a number placard like the other tables. I submitted a "ticket" to complain about the reservation app/tv issue and they responded that we could call #3463 to get a reservation. When we tried the number successive days it worked smooth as silk! The vegan and regular menu options were changed up daily which was nice. All three restaurants shared the same menu each night. Mark often ordered from the vegan menu.

Saturday July 13. Day 12 – Skagway – Glacier Point wilderness Safari – Light Rainy

- The cruise ship docked in Skagway and we headed off the ship to go on a Wilderness Safari! This included heading out to remote Alaska nature to canoe up to a glacier. Note that it was drizzly raining the whole trip! 🙄
- First was a boat ride to the wilderness locale, We did not see any wild animal unfortunately on the way
- At the locale a 10-15 minute school bus ride to meet our young guides (who lived in this wilderness cut off from civilization) was uneventful.
- Once there they gave everyone rain pants, rain jackets, life jackets and rain boots!
- Once properly geared up we were instructed on how to get in the canoes. Sit, Lift, and Slide. Sit in canoe, Lift your feet inside the canoe, Slide your butt to the middle or end of the seat row.
- We hiked 15-20 minutes thru a very pretty green lush mossy/rocky temperate rain forest to get to the Canoes.
- There were six folks in our canoe, I had a middle seat by myself. Austin and Becky were seat mates.
 - They actually made us row a bit before they kicked on the engine to power us thru the milky silty water.





- We rowed to a beach then had to hike 5 more minutes to another set of canoes to take us nearer to the Davidson Glacier.
- We were pretty disappointed that we could not get closer to the glacier but it was very shallow and boggy. Too bad. It would have made the miserable rain more bearable.
- We viewed the glacier from a rocky/gravelly beach where Mark gathered some glacier rocks!
- On the way back Austin missed a great photo opportunity as Becky had trouble exiting the canoe and was floundering a bit. I thought she was going to take a dip, but she said she was hamming it up for the photo that never came! 😊
- When we returned to base camp they had a disappointing lunch waiting for us. Meat Sandwich and chips. Not too great for B and A!
- The boat ride back to Skagway was extended as there was a distress call, "Man in Distress", and the captain headed over to assist. Once at the coordinates no one was to be found and we headed back. A fellow GA traveler (Boy Scout Master) thought he spotted something by the rocks and the Captain detoured over again finding nothing. The Dalton GA traveler turned out to be a finalist of the Who's got Talent contest the ship was having. He sung an Elvis song Mom and Austin reported (Dad missed due to a Craps heater session!). The boat Captain later reported that the man had been rescued. It would have been a great story to be part of a rescue but it was not to happen on this day.

- It was literally raining the whole trip and poor Becky was super miserable but she sucked it up and took one for the team! No food, bathroom, and I think her rain pants leaked as well.
- Once the boat returned and docked Mark and Austin did a walking tour of the town of Skagway in the mist while Becky headed for warmth of the cruise ship.
 - M and A found some good T shirts and big bag of good (ok, let's say great!) caramel popcorn on their adventures. A also bought some tasty fried dough sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon at Dough Boys.. Yummy!



Sunday July 14. Day 13 – Juneau, Mendenhall Glacier and Whale Quest – drizzly and cloudy

- Welcome to Juneau! There were 4-5 other Cruise ships in the port this day!
- This day got off to an early start! 8:45am but was delayed to 9:45. Austin luckily saw a change notice on our outside door screen.
- We had to take a transport (lifeboat) to the dock as it was under repair and unsafe. Big pain!
- Got on a bus and our Guide, “Shade” was great and funny.
 - Along the way we saw lots of Bald Eagles and even a nest high up in a tree beside the road.
 - We stopped at a Mendenhall Glacier viewing point/nature center and saw the impressive glacier and a big strong impressive water fall (Nugget Falls) next to it.
 - We toured the nature center then took a short photo point trail by passing the Nugget Falls trail which was longer but would have takes us closer to the glacier. Lots of cool smooth granite rocks along the trail!



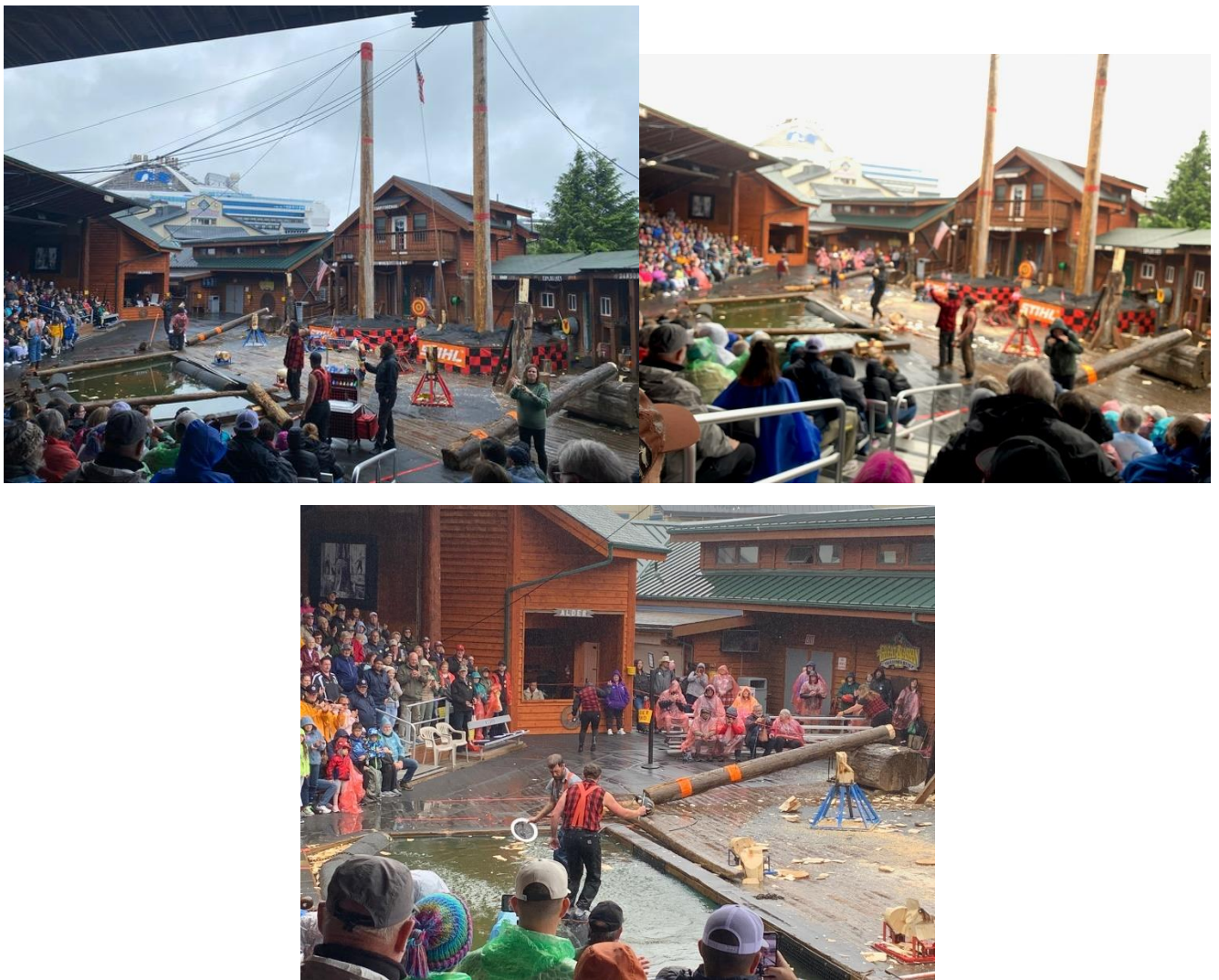
- The glacier has receded greatly over the years as detailed in the nature center. It used to be right next to the nature center and now its pretty far away!
- The bus did not leave as planned because we were missing one lady? Eventually after calling his superiors and waiting 20-30 minutes we left without her. Very odd that she would be missing?
- We were then dropped off at Auke Bay for our “Whale Quest” boat tour... Sightings guaranteed during July and August!
 - Note the ocean picture showing the clear delineation of the color of fresh water versus salt water.



- Our all Girl boat crew took us out to find the elusive Whales!!!
 - It was still drizzly and we cruised around and waited until the captain reported another boat sighted whales and we headed off that direction! I think all boat captains share whale sightings with the other tourist boats.
 - Mark decided to use binoculars to see the whales versus trying to photograph them. It is tough the photograph them in a bouncing boat in the rain.
 - On the trip we spotted 4 humpback whales including a Mom and her baby. Mark saw the famous whale tail dive! Very cool. Found one whale we tracked a bit when heading back to port and the bus.
- Upon returning us to the Juneau cruise ship port dock our bus driver, Shade, imparted to us some wisdom his dad gave him when he turned 18.. “Get Out”! 😊 We decided not to tour Juneau as it was late and drizzly. It was a long day for sure!

Monday July 15. Day 14 – Ketchikan, Lumberjack Show and Totem Bright State Park – Drizzly and Rainy

- Welcome to Ketchikan! We left the ship and the tour guides told us we would do the lumberjack show first then the totem tour.
- Lumberjack Show -
 - We stood in line and when we entered we found a good seat on the side of the arena which had cover from the rain. Other late arriving guests were seated on benches in the rain!
 - It was audience participation as well as we were broken into US and Canada teams. We rooted for the Canada LJs.
 - Ax throwing (incl audience volunteers), Log chopping, Log sawing, Pole Climbing, Log rolling activities.
 - It was fun!



- Totem Bight State Park
 - Klark our bus guide said there are 2 types of local weather reports: If you can see the mountains it is going to rain. If you can't see the mountain it is raining!
 - There were complimentary umbrellas passed out to all bus riders!

- Ketchikan is an island 36 miles long and 3 blocks wide. Real estate is precious there. Many of the houses/buildings/roads were literally built over water on stilts. Along the main road there are wooden sidewalks with street signs and those walkways go to tightly bunched together houses.
- We next headed to the state park and learned that this area/island is officially designated as a temperate rain forest.
- We saw trees growing on stumps due to thin soil and when the stumps rot away the resulting tall roots are like giraffe legs!



- Here we learned all about the indigenous clans and their totem poles!
- Ketchikan is an island and there were 4 clans on the Island.
- Totem poles are more than decorations: they evoke stories and events for their creators.
- Each totem pole has it's own story verbally told by its creator to people during a ceremony when it was officially released. It is not good to write the stories down. Even if the verbal recounting from person to person is not exact that is ok.
- It is not good to repair poles, they must be taken down and recarved from scratch.
- There are master carvers who charge about \$9K per foot and it takes them about a month to carve a foots worth of totem pole.
- Totem poles are made using Cedar wood.
- There are 4 main colors used in Totem Poles: Red, Black, White, and Green. Chewing salmon eggs were historically used to make the base for the ink.
- The figure on top of poles is usually a clan chief. They have a hat with rings each signifying the number of parties that he has thrown!
- If a figure in a totem pole is upside down that means they are dead or were killed.
- There were totem poles designating each clan placed by the river to be easily visible and they also designated if that clan has a medicine man.



- There is a clan house that is removable and mobile where several clan families lived. No nails were used.



Tuesday July 16, Day 15 – Sea Day

- Due to Mark's prowess and skill with casino gaming, especially Craps, the Princess executives delivered a complementary plate of 4 decorative chocolate covered strawberries to Mark's room! Yummy!
- Throughout the Cruise the Production shows and Comedy shows (3 different comedians) on the ship were very good and we looked forward to attending them!
- We had one complaint about the two buffet lines being set apart with no connecting walkways. It was very awkward and annoying to have to walk way around outside the dining areas from your table to get to the food. Poor design.

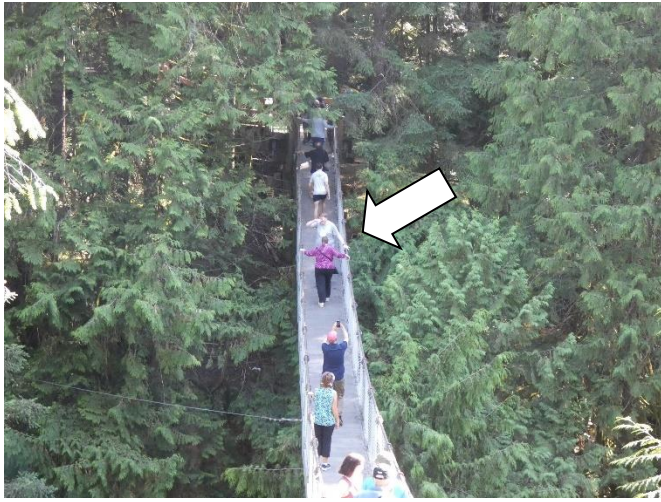
Wednesday July 17. Day 16 – Vancouver, Lynn Canyon Walk, Capilano River Park & City Highlights – Great! Sunny!

- Welcome to Vancouver! This was a very cool city!
- Since we had a long time until our flight to Seattle was departing we scheduled a tour.
- The customs and boat exit was pretty smooth but a bit long due to standing in lots of lines and being assigned colorful numbers. Finally, we boarded a tour bus with all our luggage for when we were dropped at the airport.
- We had a bus ride around Vancouver talking about the beautiful (and expensive) city with unique architecture and dropped off a few hotel passengers along the way.
- Lynn Canyon Park



- This is a very popular park in Vancouver and we arrived early to beat the crowds!

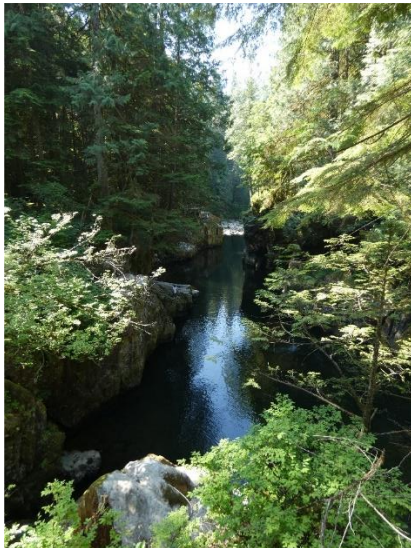
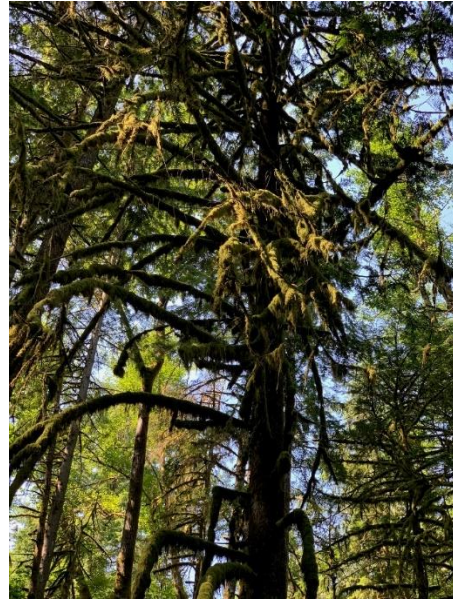
- The highlight of the Park is a tall suspension bridge which Becky bravely traversed!!!



- The middle of the bridge offered views of a waterfall and a swift moving creek.



- We then headed to The Capilano River Regional Park, Salmon Hatchery
 - The trails surrounding the Salmon hatchery are very scenic and green and moss covered. Lots of fallen large trees and smaller trees growing on the stump as we saw in Ketchikan.
 - The Salmon were actually running upstream into the hatchery through fast flowing stairsteps (See picture below) simulating shallow waterfalls when we were there. They extract the eggs from the females and “Milk” from the males and deposit them in the hatching areas. The young fish head out to the ocean from the hatchery (See picture below) when they are mature and return back 5-7 years later.





- From there we went to a pretty and scenic bay-side city park with some “fake” totem poles. Quite the yawner and we hugged the shade in the park until it was time to head for the airport!
- We had a slight delay in our homeward bound flights to Seattle then to ATL but all in all not too bad!



Thursday July 18. Day 17 – Home Sweet Home in the ATL!

- We arrived safe and sound back in ATL home from our long trip!
- Note that the next day there was a massive world-wide CrowdStrike internet issue causing all kinds of massive delays and cancellations in airlines especially Delta, the airlines we took. We were so lucky that we narrowly missed all that mess!!