

Dear Friends,

Greetings from **Sturgis, South Dakota.**

More accurately, greetings from the **Black Hills** of South Dakota and the greatest motorcycle rally of them all, **Sturgis Bike Week**. Sturgis is a small town of only 6,700 permanent residents in the rolling hills of South Dakota. But from August 3 through 9, this little town will host more than 500,000 motorcyclists at their 69th annual rally. It's mind blowing, but somehow they get it done!

Our Current Locations

July 19-July 25 -- Bulldog Creek Campground, about 5 miles south of Sturgis on Hwy 90 at Exit 37.

July 26-Aug 8 -- Shade Valley Campground, about 12 minutes east of Sturgis on Hwy 34.

Aug 9-15 -- Hart Ranch, about 15 miles south of Rapid City. (40 miles south of Sturgis.)

Catch Up

In our last newsletter, we were in **Missoula**, Montana, and getting ready to make a trek northward to **Glacier National Park**, Montana. Without a doubt, the mountains of Montana, Wyoming, and South Dakota are absolutely spectacular. Certainly, you could spend weeks, perhaps months, exploring these fabulous mountains. As you move south, the mountains give way to beautiful rolling, green hills with many lakes and lots of streams. If you go still further south in any of these three states, you come upon flat plains that to our eyes lack beauty. All three states are just full of fascinating history. Mining, trapping, hunting, and Indian wars.

Glacier National Park

Glacier is an extremely beautiful northern park that borders on Canada. In fact, it's really two parks that are adjoining. On the Canadian side of the border, it's called Waterton Lakes National Park and on the U.S. side, it's called Glacier National Park. If you have the time, try to see both parks and perhaps sooner the better. The parks used to contain over 150 glaciers, but they are melting rapidly. At the current rate of melt, they could all be gone by 2030. Some experts claim that the melt is accelerating and 2020 might be the end. Lakes and streams are everywhere. There are over 600 lakes! Every direction you look, there is unbelievable grandeur and beauty.

Accommodations, both outside and inside the park, vary greatly. At one extreme there is low cost tent camping and at the other extreme are very elegant and historic lodges. We parked outside the park in a very nice KOA campground about 2-1/2 miles from the west entrance. Generally, we are not fans of KOA in that they are usually overpriced, but in this case, the value was there.



Lake McDonald Lodge, Glacier National Park.

Lake McDonald Lodge was built between 1913 and 1914, and the interior is absolutely stunning. It is very similar to the famous Ahwahnee Lodge in Yosemite Valley, California. The backside of the lodge sits right on Lake McDonald. It is a very elegant and totally self-contained destination with lovely restaurants and bars and its own boat dock.



Jackson Glacier, Glacier National Park, Montana.

Getting around the park is extremely easy because the Park Service runs a free shuttle to all points. Even more fun is to take a "Red Bus" Tour. The free shuttle gets you around, but the Red Bus has constant and extremely interesting narration.



Red Bus Tour with Chuck's head out the top.

These vintage motor coaches, built by the White Motor Company, travel over the **Going-to-the-Sun Road** and link all of the hotels and inns within the park. These bright red coaches have roll-back canvas tops which allow for spectacular views. Happily these restored coach bodies from the 1930's have been attached to all new Ford truck chassis and running gear.

The must see tour goes up the famous Going-to-the-Sun Road, over **Logan Pass**, and down to a delightful restaurant on the far side. If you are afraid of heights, this tour will definitely get your attention. Most of it is a two lane road literally carved out of the side of a cliff with thousand foot and more drop offs.



Going-to-the-Sun Road, Glacier National Park, Montana.

On the way up, you can hang your head out the window and look straight down. So, if you're uncomfortable with heights, do not sit on the right side of the bus on the way up. On the other hand, if you sit on the right on the way down, you do have the possibility of getting a little wet.



The "Weeping Wall" portion of Going-to-the-Sun Road.



The valley below.

Only part way up the Going-to-the-Sun Road and this is what the valley below looks like. Oh yeah, it gets worse. It's so high, it has its own weather system. The ribbon in the valley is a beautiful creek that follows the road and passes by all of the beautiful resorts in the valley.



Donna and Chuck at Saint Mary Lake with Wild Goose Island in the background.

After you reach the top of the Going-to-the-Sun Road and go over Logan Pass, which is the Continental Divide, you soon come down to **Saint Mary Lake** which is extremely scenic. On our day there, we were flirting with rain on and off, so the picture is a little dark. Incidentally, this particular view is the most photographed spot in all of Glacier National Park.

Just in case your geography is a little shaky, the Continental Divide determines which way rainfall will flow. If it falls on west side, it heads toward the Pacific Ocean. If it falls on the east side, it heads toward the Gulf of Mexico or the Atlantic Ocean.

If you would like to know more about this incredible park, check out <http://www.glacierparkinc.com/>

Buffalo, Wyoming

Between Glacier National Park and Sturgis, we spent two nights at a very nice RV park in **Buffalo**, Wyoming. My oh my, is that town full of history. Buffalo was a big stop on the **Bozeman Trail** which was a shortcut between the cities in the midwest and the gold fields in the west. Unfortunately, much of this route cut through Indian territory which the Indians didn't like. As a result, we have the **Battle of the Little Bighorn** and **Custer's Last Stand**.



Occidental Hotel, Buffalo, Wyoming.

Dominating the center of Buffalo is the historic **Occidental Hotel** which was built in 1880! Lots of famous people have stayed here. **Buffalo Bill Cody, Calamity Jane, Teddy Roosevelt**, and even **Butch Cassidy** and the **Sundance Kid** dropped down from their Wyoming "Hole-in-the-Wall" hideout to stay here.



The original bar is still serving at the Occidental Hotel.

More Than a Motorcycle Rally

We did quite a bit of driving to get down from northern Montana into Wyoming and then east to South Dakota. To attend Sturgis Bike Week was not the main goal. Our primary desire was to see more of South Dakota. However, our long time friends, **Keith and Vicki**, from Missouri agreed to vacation with us in South Dakota, but they couldn't arrive until July 25 which put us very close to Bike Week. What the heck, we're here anyway so Bike Week is on the agenda. In addition, our friends, **Nullet and Sandi**, as well as **Merle and Helen**, will be arriving in South Dakota during Bike Week. Anybody else coming?

Sturgis Bike Week

What will Sturgis Bike Week be like? We don't really know as we have never been here before. Certainly, motorcycle fans occupying every conceivable campground, hotel, motel, cabin, and tent. Certainly, motorcycles on every road visiting every attraction. Huge numbers of businesses that are only open for business around Bike Week. Expensive? You bet. As we write this, we are paying \$17 per night for a beautiful 75 foot RV space at Bulldog Campground 5 miles south of Sturgis. During Bike Week, this very same parking spot goes for \$90 a night. Well, we will let you know more in our next Great Escape.

Until next time, home is where we park it,

Chuck & Donna
(530) 524-5020