

Alaska 2016

Part Two Alaska

Just roaming around the great state of Alaska





Alaska 2016 Travel Journal Part Two "Alaska"

36 Date: 7/19/2016

Time: 8:30 pm

Mileage: 39037

Location: Chicken, Alaska, USA

"I'm on Top of the World, Ma!"

I started the morning by returning to the paddlewheel graveyard with the large format camera. The sun was playing hide and peek with the clouds, so the first two shots were well lit. The last two were not lit at all. We will see how they turn out later. Jill and Sam came after a little while, Jill was trying to get her steps in before the rain...no such luck.

Leaving the campground, we started up the Top of the World Highway leading to the boundary of Alaska. This is a gravel, mostly dirt road. Even though the highest the road gets is only something over 4,000 feet, it feels like you are really in high elevation because the trees are nearly gone and the only vegetation is tundra.

The border between Canada and the US is really isolated too. After crossing into



Alaska, the road became Taylor Highway. At first it was the nicest road we been on, paved and oh so smooth but only for 10 miles. After that, using "Highway" to describe the road is being kind, as this is a potholed, washboard, and often muddy, barely a two-lane, dirt road. While I was able to run about 30 MPH on the Top of the World Highway, I had to slow to about 15-20 MPH on Taylor portion of the road, often slowing or stopping so other vehicles could

pass. Most of the time the shoulders were soft, so I didn't want to get anywhere near that, and at one point, there was a 1,000 foot drop off. Of course there were no guardrails. The description of this road in Mile Post was actually less kind, but I found that taking it slow, I really had no trouble driving the motorhome on it. It just took about 4 hours to travel 93 miles.

We arrived at Chicken, AK to find it to be about 4 times larger than it was in 1995. We pulled into the first RV park and asked about camping, but the guy said we would not like the power because it fluctuates a lot. The whole town is off the grid. So we went next door to the next RV park and asked about their power and they said they had no problem. So we bought a site for the night.

We started to check out the expanded town. We went to the Post Office, where they get mail twice a week in the summer. The road to Chicken is closed in the winter, but 5-10 people live here year round. At the Post Office is a small mining museum that includes parts of the Wade Dredge that I photographed in 1995. BLM dismantled it several years ago, because it was a safety hazard. I was disappointed, as I was planning on photographing it again. However, the BLM built a trail out to overlook the river where the derelict Mesquite Fork Dredge lies on the bank of the river, slowly disintegrating.



We took the hike, not knowing how far it was and it was all down a steep hill. We had to rush back up the hill, because we had ordered a pizza at the RV park. They cook only so many, and we had to sign up for a time to get our pizza when we checked in. They said the local miners would get them otherwise. So we double timed up the trail, what we won't do for a pizza. They have this wood fired pizza oven outside, and now the sun was shining, so we sat on their patio and enjoyed a great pizza.

After dinner, we took another tour of a dredge. This one is owned by the RV park (who are also miners). It was built by a company in Yuba City, CA for use in the Pedro Creek north of Fairbanks. After finishing its work there, the company that owned it



dismantled it and moved it to Chicken Creek and dredged that creek for several years. After sitting idle for many years, they planned to dismantle it a scrap it. The owner of the RV Park bought it for a dollar and moved it whole by trailer to the RV park at a cost of \$250,000. The dredge had been closed up tight and had a caretaker, so everything inside was still in place. Even the diesel generators still worked. The tour was even better than the dredge tour we had in Dawson City.

37 Date: 7/20/2016

Time: 8:30 pm

Mileage: 39221

Location: Delta Junction, Alaska

Need a Bigger Campground

We left Chicken Alaska this morning with clouds, a little rain and late. We were the first to pull in to the RV section where they place overnights last night and the last ones to leave. We are getting that easy does it down pat. The road was dirt at first, but the Taylor highway became paved, if you can call it that still slow going for the first 80 miles this morning.



Arrived in Tok, back on the Alaskan Highway, at lunch time, nice paved roads and WE HAVE CELL SERVICE!!! You don't know how much you miss just picking up your smart phone and finding answers to important questions you are debating between the two of you, like when was Alaska purchased before or after the Civil War? After, from Russia in 1867 for 7.2 million.



It is also nice to be able to call family. Canada service was spotty and expensive, I Roam didn't work so well, so we basically turned our phones off and used Wi-Fi at each of the visitor center's along the way to post these missives. So for the next month we can be contacted on our usual phones (530) 318-8727 (Les) or 530 318-8700 (Jill). We may not always be cell range but we will have them on again.

Today, we sat in Tok, for a couple of hours, having lunch and making calls.

We then decide to travel on to Delta Junction and the "end" of the Alaskan Highway.

We planned to camp in one of Alaska's State Campgrounds and I was worried that there might not be room, only 16 sites and we were coming in late...around 6:00 PM! No problem, we have a nice site overlooking Clearwater Creek. But because we doing more miles today I didn't get much walking in. My fit-bit like thing increased my goal today (it liked cell service as well) and I had to walk around and around this

campground about five times. I needed a bigger campground. Going to make sure we find a trail tomorrow. **Jm-a**

38 Date: 7/21/2016

Time: 6:45 pm

Mileage: 39326

Location: Fairbanks, Alaska

Beyond the Alaskan Highway at North Pole

Leaving camp, we had breakfast in Delta Junction. This is where the Alaskan Highway in 1943 ended and joined an existing road at that time. We also toured the historic Sullivan Roadhouse started in 1905, its now a museum. It is one of the few original log cabin roadhouses left. These (about 60 at one time), cropped up in early 1900s on the newly cleared Valdez to Fairbanks trail. Now known as the Richardson Highway.

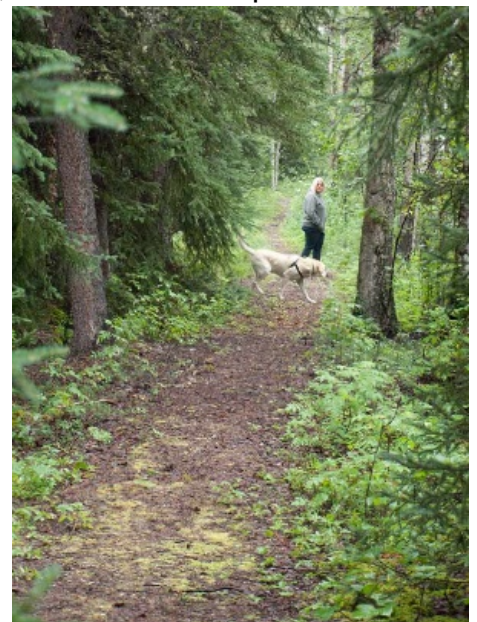


Traveling up this Highway the rest of the morning and it was a very rainy drive. As the rain began to let up, we found Harding Lake State Recreation Area with an interpretive trail, so Jill had us stop and take a little hike through the Boreal Forest. It was a short trail and the rain began

again just as we got back to the motorhome.

We arrived on the outskirts of Fairbanks (North Pole, AK) and got an RV site at Riverview RV Park. After setting up on the site, we took the Tracker to the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitor Center in Fairbanks proper to pick up information about places to see and

things to do.



Very nice visitor center with great exhibits, and cultural demonstrations. Shopping, showers and taking it easy finished this day.

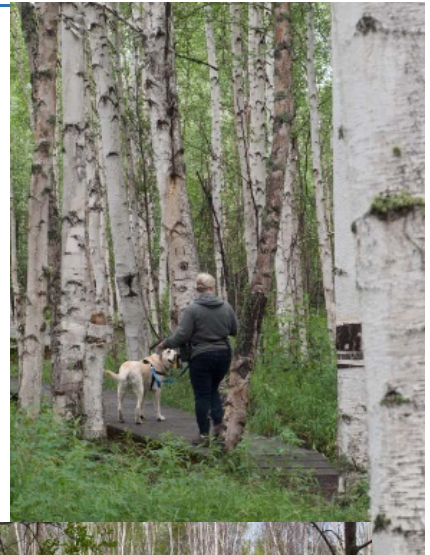
Time: 7:10 pm

Mileage: 39326

Location: Fairbanks, Alaska

In Fairbanks

We got up late today, so we started our touring at the Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge around noon. The Refuge was an old dairy farm, and in the fields were Sandhill Cranes. The rain let up so we took a walk on the Boreal Forest trail. We were warned to wear mosquito repellent and they provided it. Much of the trail had raised wood walk ways. However, there were a few spots where the trail was under water, because of the recent rains. After the 1.5 mile walk, we went out to very late lunch.



After lunch we toured Pioneer Park in Fairbanks. This is a collection of historic buildings brought to a central location in Fairbanks, opening in 1967 to celebrate the centennial of the purchase of Alaska from Russia. While they had lots of old buildings including cabins, many now house gift shops, rather than interpreting the history of the buildings.



We ended the day with an entertaining talk by a local senior at our RV park. He told lots of interesting stories and some were even true. He also quotes Robert Service poems from memory



Time: 9:30 pm

Mileage: 39326

Location: Fairbanks, Alaska

The Chena River

We got reservations to take the riverboat tour in the afternoon, so we started out the morning by touring the Museum of the North on the University of



Alaska campus.

Since we had gotten up late

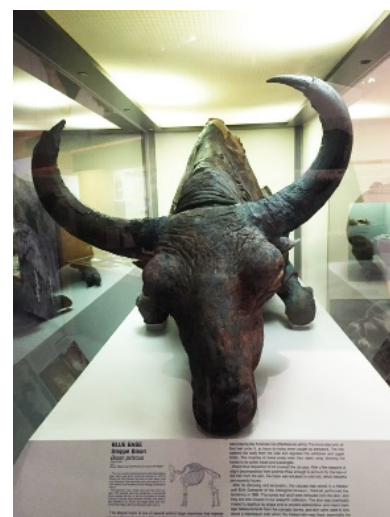
yet again, we ate out first. So we got to the museum a little later than we expected. When we got into the museum, we found it was really great. It covered everything from dinosaurs to the invasion by the Japanese at the beginning of WWII.



There was a fascinating display comparing the smaller Mastodon with the larger Woolly Mammoth. Another display showed the mummified Steppe Bison, called "Blue Babe". We also breezed through the art gallery upstairs.



We got to the Riverboat just in time to board. This riverboat is the third generation stern wheeler owned by the family. The stern wheel is driven with hydraulic motors rather than steam. The tour was a lot more than just riding on a riverboat.



After leaving the dock, we started downstream and moved aside to allow as a small pontoon plane to take off. The boat put the pilot on the loud speaker and talked with him about the use of planes year round in Alaska. The pilot found this plane as a derelict and rebuilt it and now uses it every day.



Just downstream, we stopped next to a dog sled training center owned by Susan Butcher's daughter. Susan Butcher was not only the first woman to win the Iditarod Race, and then went on to win 3 more times. The daughter also spoke over the loud speaker about the training process. Then they hooked up 10 dogs to a motor-less ATV and had them make a run pulling the musher on the ATV. Since there are no reins to guide the dogs, they are trained to respond to calls from the musher. All the dog in the kennels are exercised this way every day and they get excited when they see other dogs running by the kennel.



Further downstream we got a demonstration we had a demonstration of salmon flaying and drying, the native way. The fish wheel on the river is uses the river flow to scoop salmon out of the river. This technology was introduced by the Chinese. After turning the riverboat around where the Chena River met the Tanana River, we stopped and



disembarked at the native village and had several presentations by you native guides. They told us about included their living conditions, their dogs sled use, and their use of introduced Reindeer. Reindeer are domesticated Cariboo.



41 Date: 7/24/2016

Time: 7:30 pm

Mileage: 39326

Location: Fairbanks, Alaska

A Day Off

We were very tired yesterday, so we decided to take the day off from being a tourist. We did the laundry and then went to see a movie: "Star Trek: Beyond" at the local IMAX theater. Of course the weather broke today, with plenty of sun. Came home to just hang out in our Tiny House and it started raining again... Oh well, nice quiet day.

42 Date: 7/25/2016

Time: 9:30 pm

Mileage: 39326

Location: Fairbanks, Alaska

Chena Hot Springs

Today, we decided to go to Chena Hot Springs. It is located about 60 miles north of Fairbanks. We took the Tracker for this run. The first part of the Chena Springs Road was quite lumpy with frost heaves and subsidence. The road department keeps patching the road, but the subsurface is wet and freezes every winter damaging the road.



We stopped at Rosehip Campground to walk a nature trail, but we found it flooded.

There is a lot to do at the Hot Springs than just sit in the hot pools. They have horseback riding, ATV and 4X4 touring, bicycling and hiking. But we were there to soak in the hot water. We would have gotten massages too, but the people were off today.

On the way back we stopped at the trailhead for the Angel Rocks Trail. The trail started out running flat along the river. It had some small ups and downs and then the last ¼ mile was straight up to the view point of the peaks called "Angel Rocks". I got some nice digital photos, but the hike was a bit tough on me as I had to stop part way back for a snack. It was a good day, but tiring. **LDA**



Time: 7:30 pm

Mileage: 39463

Location: Denali, Alaska

Moving on to Denali

Communications – I thought Jill wanted to move and she thought I wanted to move, so we did. We could have spent more time in the Fairbanks area.

So we headed down the Parks Highway. This road is one of the newer roads in Alaska. Built in 1971 to connect Anchorage with Fairbanks and provide easier access to Denali National Park. Up until then, the only way to Denali NP was the Denali Highway. This road runs due west from the Richardson Highway to the park, over a hundred miles off nasty dirt road. In 1995, we drove that highway and swore we would never do that again. The potholes and washboard was so bad; it took 2 days to make the distance. We may do some sightseeing with the Tracker this week on the road, but the motorhome will not go on that road.



Anyway, the Parks Highway is also known as the George Parks Highway and the Ridge Route, not to mention Alaska Highway 3. George Parks was an early territorial governor of Alaska. The road also climbs out of the valley that Fairbanks sits in to run a ridge to the south. On the ridge, the road was pretty good, no frost heaves or slumps, because the sub-base was not wet. It is interesting to note that Alaska has no interstates or US highways. I wonder if the

State gets money from the Federal Highway Administration to maintain any of their roads. Alaska and Hawaii are isolated from the rest of the US.

Along the road, there were very long distance views of forest, perhaps up to a hundred miles, but not much else. We crossed the Nenana River and stopped at the town of Nenana on the south banks of the river. At the Visitor Center, we found out about the town, what to see and the big past time that the town is famous for: The Nenana Ice Classic! We walked around town to see everything, the general store, the train depot, the cultural center and the Church. The big activity in town is the project to raise all the building 18" to keep them from flooding when the river over flows its banks.

What is The Nenana Ice Classic you ask? Well each year, the Nenana River freezes, just like every other river in Alaska. In February, the towns people place a Tee Pee out in the middle of the river on the ice. Then they sell tickets and you write your guess as to when the Ice will break up in the spring. The Tee Pee is tethered to a clock somehow to record the official time of the break up. The Tee Pee has to move downstream a hundred feet to stop the clock. Last year it moved far enough to begin tipping over and then stalled for about twenty minutes before it tipped over and stopped the clock. At the Cultural Center, they displayed the official books of the entries for the last ten years or so. I looked at the 2015 book and each page had two columns of names and their times for 1439 pages. This is a small town of perhaps a hundred people, so I would guess people from all over are making these guesses. So naturally we bought the \$2.50 ticket and made a guess: April 21, 2017 at 4:15 pm. There is a monetary prize, but we don't know what that is. And you have to purchase the ticket in town (or elsewhere in Alaska) as the post office will not allow these tickets to be sent out through the mail, because this is gambling! This is a great money making activity for the town and this year is the Hundredth year of the Ice Classic.



We headed on south, looking for a place to camp. We finally stopped at Denali Grizzle Bear. We initially got two nights, but when we checked around, everything else was booked up. So we got 4 more nights. Then August 1st, we will move into the park itself. Meanwhile we will sight see outside the park.



44 Date: 7/27/2016 Recon

Time: 11:00 pm

Mileage: 39463

Location: Denali, Alaska

Getting Oriented

We awoke to sunshine and lovely clouds. But we needed



to check on our reservations for next Monday to camp at Teklanika River (Tek) which is 29 miles inside the park. So off to the Visitor Center we go...wrong place, over to the Wilderness Access Building. All the camping and reservations and stuff is run by a Concessionaire. Well lucky we did, the only reservations I made on line before we left for this trip, and I blew it. Once in the Tek Campground, you can't drive your vehicle and you need tram passes to see the park. I made two campsite reservations, and no tram passes. So we cleaned up the mess and made more reservations for next week. Now we are going to camp three nights at Tek in our RV, then tent camp at Wonder Lake (via the "camp" bus, 93 miles (short of the end of the park road), and then two nights at NPS Riley Creek which is right at the entrance gate to the park. Took over an hour to make reservations and make sure we had everything timed right. It left with our heads bussing.



Next, we drove 15 miles down the highway and had Sam interviewed so he can stay at a nearby Canine Resort the night we tent camp. He will watch the RV the other days and protect it from squirrels and grizzlies. This place was nicer than the place we are staying now! It has a lodge and café attached and off the beaten path next to a little lake. This kennel was the only one I could find So I was worry they wouldn't take him. They put him in the kennel for 15 minutes to see what



he does. He passed with flying colors...he laid down and went to sleep! So next Wednesday we will drop him off at the kennel, the motorhome and car at the Visitor Center overnight and head to Wonder Lake on a bus.

So all our plans made we to the town, little wide spot just north of the entrance with all the tourist traps and stuff. We parked in front of a place that was advertising flights around Mount Denali and one that even landed on a glacier nearby! Another NPA Concessionaire, and not cheap,

but with the sun still shining, we jumped at the chance for the last flight at 6:00! WOW, Double, Triple WOW! This flight was so great it deserves its own Blog!!! SEE NEXT ENTRY.

44b Date: 7/27/2016 Flight

Time: 11:30 pm

Mileage: 39463

Location: Denali, Alaska

Best Flight Ever

Jill walked into the first shop advertising "Flightseeing" Denali and started asking questions. As it turned out it is the only flightseeing concessionaire that is allowed to actually land on a glacier in the park. It was expensive! We almost didn't do it, but the weather was beautiful and rain was predicted for the next day.



So we asked about camera packs and were told packs are not allowed. But after more discussion, we decided to take the evening flight. I scaled down from my 35-pound pack to 18 pounds of large format camera, the wide angle lens and red filter, 2 film holders (B&W and Color), the lightweight tripod and dark cloth. Most of this fit in my photo vest.

We were picked up at the RV park and driven to the airport north of Healy. There were 16 of us tourists, so they split us up into two de Havilland turbo prop airplanes. The flight was about an hour each way with about a half hour on the glacier

We took off and flew into the park parallel to the road in the park. We headed toward Mt. Denali as the pilot pointed out points of interest. We saw lots of shrinking glaciers and jagged peaks. There were clouds that we had to go around, but finally, we saw Denali sticking out of the top of the clouds. We got sore shoulders, Jill and I were sitting side by side so we kept punching each other as a signal to past the digital camera back and forth to take pictures. She got the best photos of Denali as she was on the shaded side of the plane. We flew close to a number of peaks and slid over some saddles where the ground dropped off a thousand or more feet of the back side. All very exciting and spectacular! Most the time Jill mouthed Shiiiiit, as we flew RIGHT next the granite face cliffs larger and steeper higher than El Captain in Yosemite.

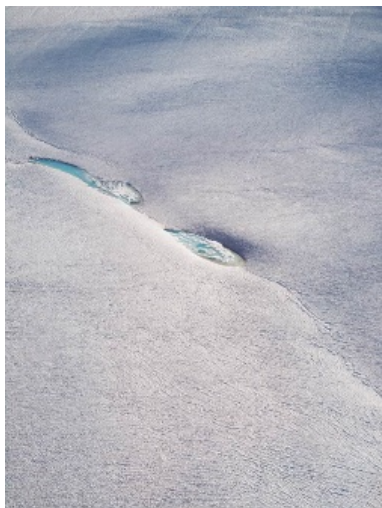
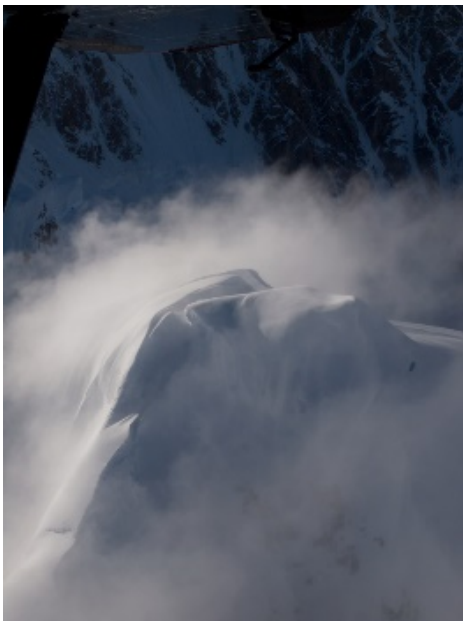
Finally, we circled down and came in for a landing on the North Fork of the Ruth Glacier, east of Mt. Denali, just under Explorers Peak. Unfortunately, Mt. Denali was shrouded in a cloud, so I had to settle for shooting Buttress and the ridge to its east. With 7 minutes left, I also shot the rock face to the south of the landing site. With towering mountains, and glaciers we must be super high. We asked how high we are we at the landing site: Elevation 5,700 feet. We live at that elevation! The area

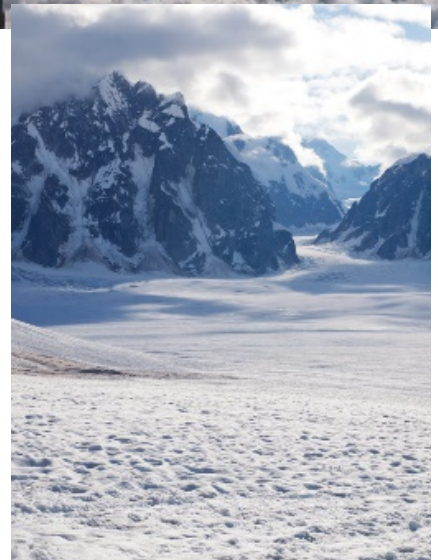
around Denali National Park is only an average of 200-300 feet above sea level. So a 20,300-foot mountain rising from the river plains...no wonder the natives called it Denali, or The High One.

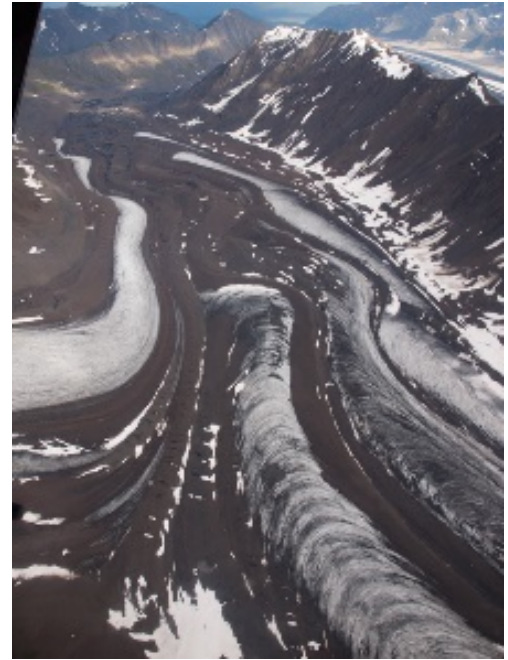
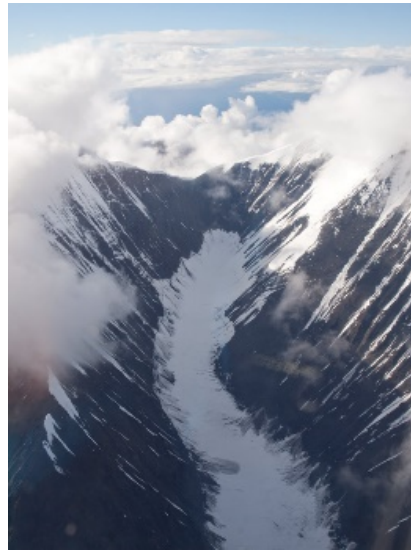
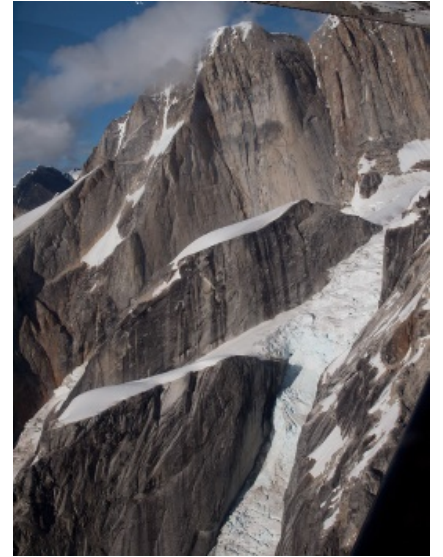
When the half hour ended, we loaded up the planes and took off again. The landing was much smoother than the take off. On the way back we had great light on my side of the plane of several large glaciers, glaciers merging, and jagged peaks with shadowed back sides.

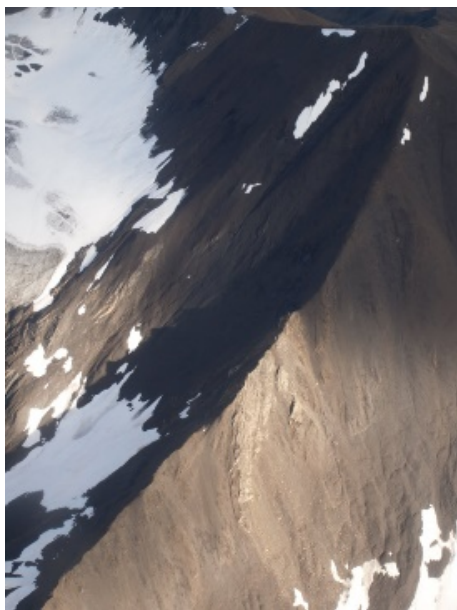
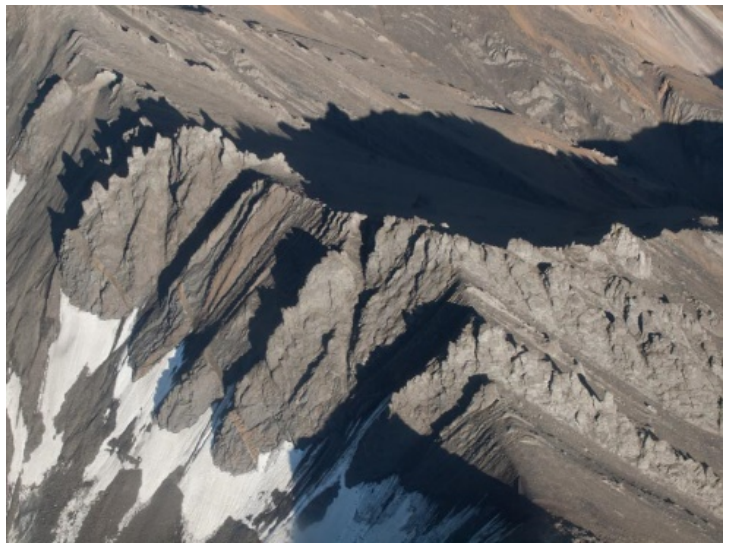
When we were being driven back to be dropped off, one of the other passengers spotted a moose in a parking lot. The driver turned the van around and we went back to get some photos. It turned out that the parking lot was actually the State road department yard and the moose was happily snacking on a pile of salt that is used to de-ice the roads in the winter.

Back at the motorhome we downloaded the photos from the digital camera. Initially there were 416 photos. After a light dinner, I made my first culling pass and reduced the photos to 195. After the second pass we were down to 110. Third Pass: 54. Finally 27!









45 Date: 7/28/2016

Time: 8:00 pm

Mileage: 39463

Location: Denali, Alaska

Rainy Day

We pretty much did nothing today except work on the photos from the flight yesterday.

46 Date: 7/29/2016

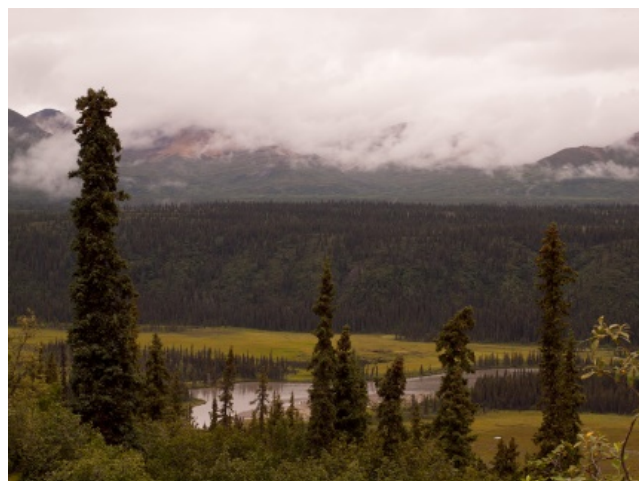
Time: 10:00 pm

Mileage: 39463

Location: Denali, Alaska

Another Rainy Day

We went to the Visitor Center at the park to use their free Wi-Fi to post the last 3 travel blogs. The Wi-Fi at the RV park is only free for the first 30 continuous minutes. Then we returned to the motorhome for me to do the laundry and Jill to pay bills. It is still raining.



We decided to explore down the highway to Cantwell. The literature indicated there should be a grocery store at Cantwell, but we never found it. We also looked for a trail we saw on the map, but it too was not to be found. The town looks to have been more active in the past.



From Cantwell, we headed east on the Denali Highway. We drove this highway in 1995 and 104 miles of it was very bad washboard and potholes. I swore I would not take the road again. Since we were in the Tracker, we felt we could handle the rough road. We found the first 29.5 miles of the road to be in reasonably good condition. There were some potholes, but

very little washboard. Every road and turn off for the first 20 miles was posted No Trespassing. Several interesting areas for fishing are disappointingly closed to hunting and fishing with these signs. Where are our Public Lands? We found the highway department was replacing a bridge about 22 miles out. As we drove by on the detour road,



Jill noticed one of the off-duty workers fly fishing the creek they are bridging.



At 29.5 miles from Cantwell we came to Brushkana Campground. It is managed by BLM and is very nice. Brushkana Creek runs next to the campground and looks like a good place to fish as the water is clear. On the far bank of the Creek is an old cabin that looks like only a little more bank erosion will claim it. We found a hiking/ATV trail leaving the campground and going up on the high bench of the creek. On the bench, we

iked through a boggy area and it had lots of wild blueberries. We picked about a cup of blueberries and will have them in pancakes



On the way back to the motorhome, we stopped at the Perch Restaurant on the Parks Highway about 10 miles south of the RV park. Fresh mushroom soup,

then trout dinner followed with a Homestead Berry Pie was outstanding! (We split the meal that's why we got desert - JMA). The restaurant was perched high on the top of a hill with nice views of the nearby mountains. To lead customers off the highway and up to the restaurant, they placed moose silhouettes along the road. Sam saw them and thought they were real animals and barked at every one of them.
- LDA



Time: 7:30 pm

Mileage: 39463

Location: Denali, Alaska

Sounds Like a Broken Record, but it's Another Rainy Day, but Two Hikes!

We started the day by walking the highway bridge over the Nenana River next to the RV park to the Ox Bow Trail. It was not raining yet, just starting to threaten rain. The trail was marked as a Park Service trail, but it was not being maintained. It went out to a point of land where the river makes a 180-degree bend. This was another Boreal forest. Most of the trail tread was exposed tree roots, so I walked the entire trail watching where to place my feet. So naturally I saw mostly ground cover vegetation, including berry plants and mushrooms. So I took lots of close-up picture of these. There was also a gravel bar that I was able to walk on to and take other photos.



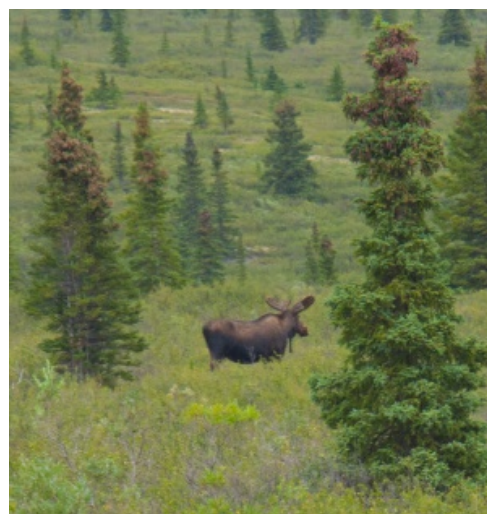
After lunch at the motorhome we went into the park and got our new NPS stamp book stamped. It is the centennial of the National Park Service this year. We also bought a few books and a tee shirt.



From there we headed further into the park on the only road. It is only open to the general public as far as Savage River. So we drove there. On the way, we have to wait for tour busses and other vehicles that stopped to look at wildlife. Since we did not see any of these, we don't know what they saw except for the last animal jam where Jill spotted a female moose as we drove by.

At Savage River, we parked on the far side of the river and walked the Savage River Loop Trail. It goes downstream a mile and crosses the river with a walking bridge and returns to the parking lot on the south side of the river. We crossed the vehicle bridge to get back to the car. Even though the light was non-existent, I still took digital photos, mostly of rock outcrops and close up of rocks and flowers along the trail.

On the way back to the park entrance, we found a few more animal jams. One of these we actually saw the male moose everyone else saw. We stopped and took a few photos.

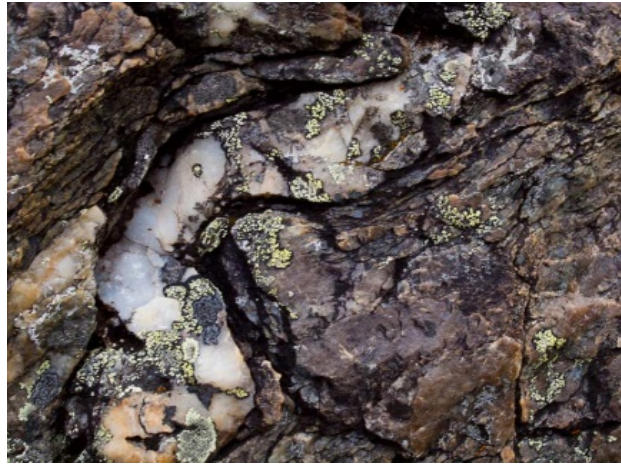


Finally, we drove up to Healy to get gas in the Tracker and look for groceries. We found a few items in Healy and then checked a “General Store” in Denali. Groceries, especially fresh fruits and vegetables, are of very short supply throughout the area. In one store, Jill found that they were selling instant oatmeal by the individual packages for a dollar each. Gas was \$2.96 a gallon, while down at Cantwell yesterday it was \$3.59 a gallon. Denali is a bit out in the middle of nowhere, so everything that is available is expensive.









48 Date: 7/31/2016

Time: 8:30 pm

Mileage: 39463

Location: Denali, Alaska

Day Off and a Trail

This was planned as a day off from touring, so we could take showers and start packing for Wonder Lake. It was another lightly rainy day anyway. We also watched scratchy movies on the TV.

About 3 pm we headed to the park to ask a few more questions and then we walked the Horseshoe Lake Trail. It was a well maintained trail, but it was steep down to the lake. The lake is dammed with a big beaver dam. There were several other beaver dams downstream of the main dam. After climbing back to the top of the trail, we crossed railroad tracks. About that time a sightseeing train operated by Alaska Rail Road. Jill continued walking on a trail to the visitor center to made her step goal and I met her there.





49 Date: 8/1/2016

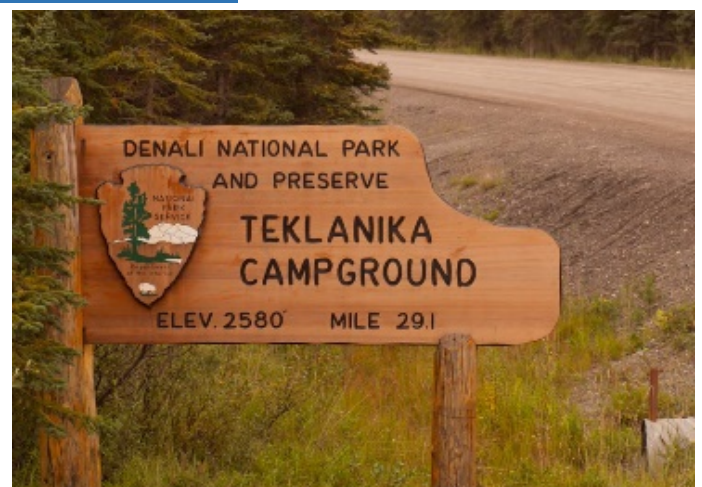
Time: 6:30 pm

Mileage: 39500

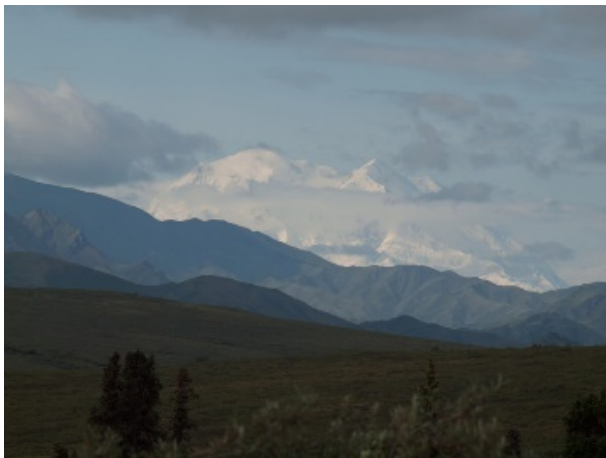
Location: Denali, Alaska

Into Teklanika Campground

We actually set an alarm to get up by this morning. After breakfast, we dumped the Grey and Black water tanks and topped up the fresh water. We parked the Tracker at the Visitor Center parking lot and headed in the park road with the motorhome. The dirt sections of the road as far as Savage River was in much better shape this morning. We realized that they are doing their road work at night when the visitors are not driving the road.



At Savage River we showed our campground reservation and road permit to the Ranger and proceeded on toward the campground. On the way, we saw 5 moose and 5 Cariboo near the road. One Cariboo charged at us as the motorhome was stopped in the road. We also joined the 30% club for the second time this trip. The 30% club are the people who come to the park and actually get to see Mt. Denali. Yes, we got a couple of views of the High One. Much of it was obscured with clouds, but there was no doubt what it was.





At the campground, we drove both loops looking for the perfect site. Many have no view except the campers across from them or close up with the trees (Black Spruce). Not wanting to feel claustrophobic, we opted for site 17, next to the amphitheater. The trees in front of the site are more open and we were getting sun light in the front window. Yes, I said sun light.

After lunch we walked out to the bus stop and caught the first one by. We took it to the Toklat Rest Area on the Toklat River (mile 53). There were a few stops along the way. At the stop at Polychrome Overlook, I heard my name being call from a few rows back in the bus, but since I didn't know anyone except Jill here, I assumed they were calling to someone else and I didn't turn around. As people were getting off the bus at this stop, the people calling my name stopped to ask if my name was "Les". It turned out that They did know me! It was Holly, the Botanist from Boise BLM and her family. Holly was on a route evaluation ID Team that I worked with in the winter of 2014. She is on a detail with BLM in Anchorage and her family came up for a visit and to see Denali NP. We had a very nice conversation as we drove on to Toklat River. They were headed to Eielson Visitor Center at mile 65.



We got off the bus at Toklat and looked around a bit. There is a book store in a big tent there and of course the river. I set up the spotting scope to look for creatures on the mountain sides. But the wind was blowing too hard for the tripod I was using so that didn't work. As it turned out, we only had about 15 minutes before the next bus headed east was due to leave and after that we thought we would have a 3 hour wait to catch the next bus.



The bus coming out of Wonder Lake had room for us so we took it back to Teklanika Rest Area. On the way we had a Cariboo block the bus for a few minutes. When it finally got off the road, I finally could see it briefly. It was still molting last winter's fur. The bus stopped for Dall Sheep twice, but we did not see them at the first location. At the second location, we saw 5 white specks near the top of a mountain some distance from the bus. We would have had to set up the spotting scope to get a photo at that distance, so we didn't get a photo. The Teklanika Rest Area is a mile from the campground entrance, so Jill opted to walk the rest of the way to the campground, as she needed to make her step goal (I walked too). LDA



Time: 8:45 pm

Mileage: 39500

Location: Denali, Alaska

Sunny Day!!!! Eielson Visitor Center

The alarm went off at 6:30 am and we crawled out of bed about 7:00. The sun was peeking out between clouds. I shot a couple of pictures from in front of the motorhome. We ate a quick breakfast and headed for the bus stop in front of the campground.

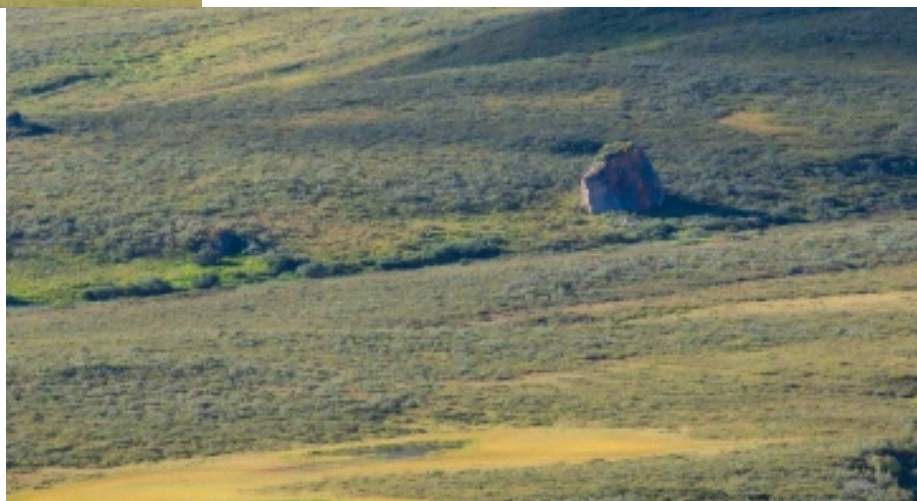
At the Teklanika Rest Area, some said they saw Dall Sheep on the mountain across the river, but as they were simply white specks, I didn't see them. However, just down the road near Igloo Creek, the bus stopped so we could see more Dall Sheep. These are a smaller white version of a Bighorn Sheep. This time I saw them, a bunch of white specks on the hillside and this time the spots had legs and were moving around. I took some pictures and when enlarged, I was able to count 10 sheep. As we started into Igloo Canyon, we saw two more Dall sheep, just a little closer, but to really see them in the photo, I had to enlarge it.



As we continued on, we found our first Caribou of the day, a nice male with a big rack close to the road. The light continued to improve.

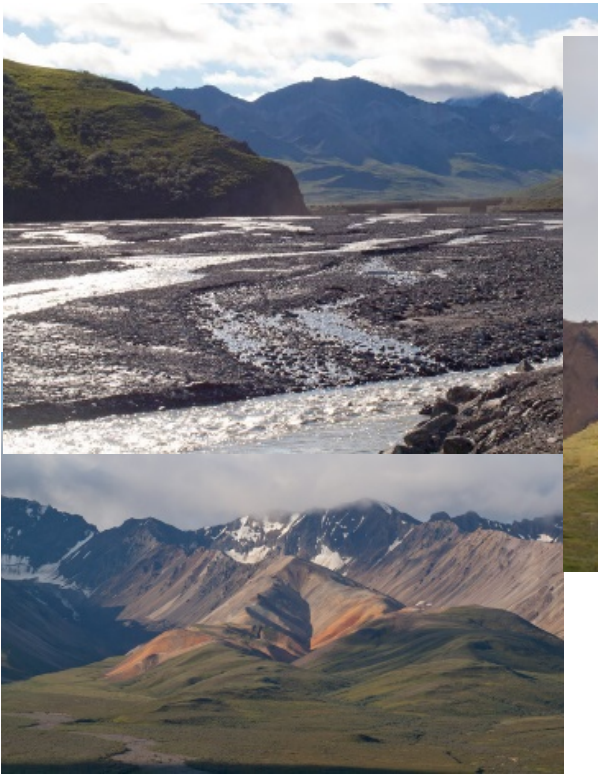
Stopping at Polychrome Overlook, we got off and walked up the hill to take photos of the beautiful colors of the rocks by us and across the valley.

On the valley floor is a rock that does not appear all that large, but it is as tall as a three story building. And more importantly, it does not belong here. It is a glacial erratic, carried by a glacier from perhaps a hundred miles away. As we walk



the loop trail on top of the hill we noticed a familiar mountain top peeking around a closer mountain.

Continuing along the park road, we had a brief stop at the Toklat River Rest Area again. The light was better and was shining off the many braids of the river.



Back on the bus, now heading for Eielson Visitor Center, someone on the bus spotted a bear. When we stopped all I could see was a little movement in a large bush about 200 feet away. But soon a female Grizzly Bear appeared and was moving toward the bus, grazing on Soap Berries as she moved. But she was not alone. Also in the bush playing with the bush and each other were Springer twin cubs. They followed mom down to the road and they all crossed the road in front of the bus, less than 30 feet



from the bus. What I didn't know was that Jill got a short video of the family after it crossed the road.

Moving on toward Stoney Dome, we got another glimpse of Mt. Denali as the driver's view. At Stoney Dome, we stopped briefly to get one of the iconic Denali photos. From here the road drops a few hundred feet and travels across the valley toward the mountain. We are 26 miles from the mountain at this point. Denali stands 15,000 feet above the rest of the terrain around it.



We finally arrived at Eielson Visitor Center, 23 miles from Mt. Denali. The building we remembered from 21 years ago was GONE! It turns out, the Park Service replaced it 8 years ago with a visitor center that has the same foot print, but is built into the hillside. It has both solar and hydro supplied power and a roof top observation deck. To our amazement, we now had full sunshine and the mountain only had a few low clouds hanging around it. This was even a better view than what we saw 21 years ago. We entered the 30% club for the second day in a row.



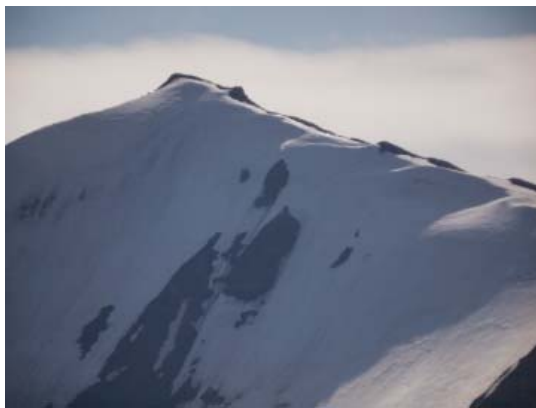
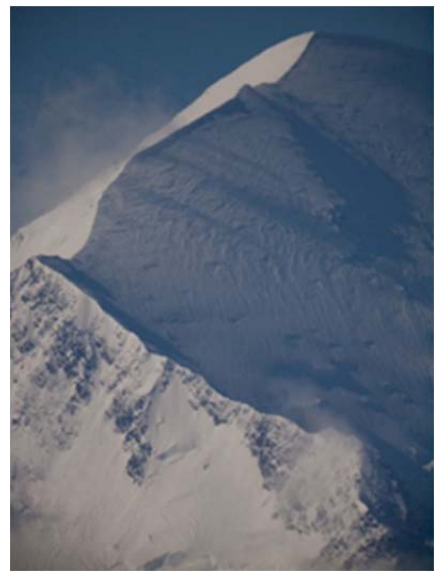
Unfortunately, we had no idea the clouds would cooperated today, so we left the large format camera in the motorhome. We did bring the spotting scope and I set that up to take some shots of the mountain. The north peak, standing lower than the south beak was more photogenic today.

Unlike 21 years ago, there were no Cariboo at the visitor center, only a bear way down on the along the river. There are two trails from the visitor center. Jill decided that she would rather hike than paint, so she went up the trail to Thorofare Ridge. I started the climb too, but when I realized that the trail switch-backed up about 2,000 feet, and looked like it climbed straight up at the top...I found a rock by the side of the trail and sat down. She continued up the trail while I had a snack and set up the spotting scope again.

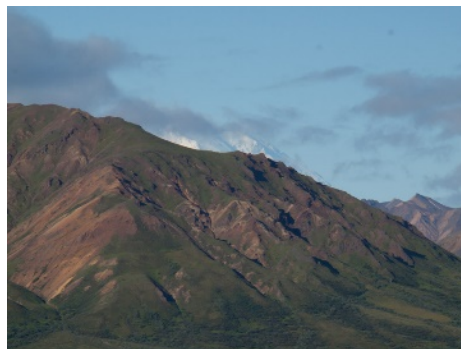


By the time Jill reached the top of Thorofare Ridge, Mt. Denali was totally obscured by clouds. To prove she made it all the way, she had an eleven-year-old kid hiking by himself take her picture with her phone. She took pictures of him too and will email them to his mother when we get internet service again. She also took a picture of the visitor center from the top of the ridge





On the way back to Teklanika Campground we saw more bears and Caribou. By the time we got back to the RV, it started raining again. While writing this blog this evening, I noticed a tree squirrel running back and forth in front of the motorhome. It kept following basically the same path each time, but every time it went right to left, it was carrying Spruce cones. I saw it bury some by a bush in front of the motorhome. It must have made hundreds of trips and it was still working after it got too dark to take pictures. Near the end of the writing of this blog a Snowshoe Hare made an appearance.



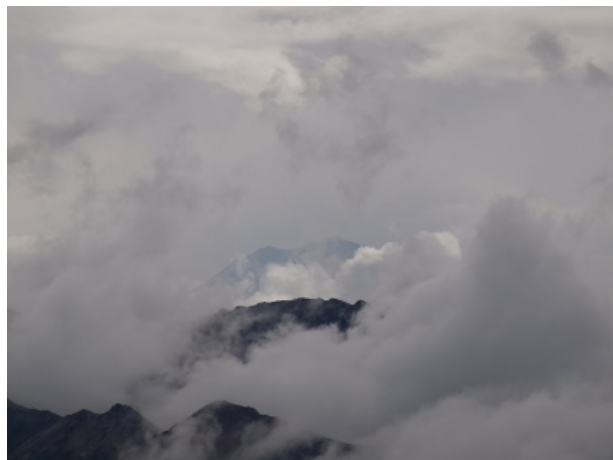
Time: 8:45 pm

Mileage: 39500

Location: Denali, Alaska

Rainy Day in Denali

The alarm went off at 6:30 am again this morning and we looked out to see a gloomy sky. It looked like just fog, but then it began to rain a little, then harder and we cuddled in bed. We got up about 8 am and had a good breakfast and it continued to rain. We ran the generator to charge the batteries of the motorhome. I started writing this blog after turning off the generator. Most parks, including Denali have generator hours. Here it is 8-10 am and 4-8 pm. The tree squirrel is back collecting and storing Spruce cones for the winter.



It rained all day. About 3pm, we took an hour and a half walk along the park road to a vista of the Teklanika River beyond the rest area. It was raining lightly for much of the walk, but stopped on the way back, the road was sloppy with mud and Sampson's legs and belly were very muddy by the time we returned to the campground. On the edge of the campground's main road, Jill had seen a small clear creek running, so we took Sam there to splash the mud off. It did OK, but my hands got very cold. So we towed him off before getting into the motorhome and would not let him near the couch while he was wet.

It started to rain again as we turned up the loop to our motorhome. When we walked through the rest area and saw the people from the buses milling around, it appeared that they were now seeing much on their bus ride. Visibility was down to about 100 yards and not up the hillsides at all. So the peaks were not visible and unless the wildlife was very close, they would not have seen any of them either. On our walk, the only things we saw was one tree squirrel, 2 Dark-eyed Juncos (small sparrow type birds), a pile of bear poop loaded with Soap Berries and some 3-day old moose tracks. We are glad we spent the day in the motorhome instead of riding a bone jarring bus to see nothing. Our "Tiny House" is quite comfortable.

When we got back to the motorhome it was after 4:30, so we started the generator again to bring the house batteries back to fully charged. Tomorrow, we will leave early to get back to the entrance. First thing we have to do is see if the camping bus will be able to make the run to Wonder Lake. Just after we paid for our reservations last week, a landslide occurred about a mile past Eielson Visitor Center, closing the road with about a hundred yards of 10-foot deep mud and rock. The people beyond were stuck out there for two days until a single lane could be opened. Since then, the Park Service has only been allowing bus traffic through at 8 am and 6 pm until they can provide safe access. With today's steady rain, the road may be closed again.

Time: 8:45 pm

Mileage: 39529

Location: Denali, Alaska

Tent Camping at Wonder Lake.

We started out with our Tiny House (the RV) from Teklanika Campground early this morning. In fact, when we came to the paved road, most of it is a construction zone. It was rougher than the "dirt road" we traveled at first. At the major construction zone at Savage River, they were still working and we had to guess, where they wanted us to go and we followed a compactor until he turned off to get out of our way. We parked in the visitor center overnight parking area. While Jill took Sampson to his B&B for the next two days, I went to the visitor center and used their Wi-Fi to publish the last three blog entries. Then we ate lunch and did our final setup of camping gear for Wonder Lake.

At 2:00 pm, the camper bus picked up us and 8 other people. There was a second camper bus heading out at the same time, but that one picked up people at the WAC (Wilderness Access Center). Both buses needed to be at Eielson at 6:00 pm to be allowed through the landslide nearby. We got through just fine and headed to Wonder Lake Campground. Both buses spent the night at the camp ground. Our driver, Moana, is 4th in seniority with the bus company and chooses this run. She said it is the best bus run in the park. She was good. On a very narrow, winding and high up on a cliff face portion of the road, she had to back-up to let another bus through. We were all holding our breaths, when one rider says, "There is a caribou down on the river," over thousand feet down! She simply said "Thanks for the information." And everyone on the bus laughed. On the bus ride to Wonder Lake, we saw moose, Dall sheep, grizzly bear and of course, caribou. Denali was pretty much clouded over during the bus ride.



We arrived about 7:10 pm. There was a campfire program scheduled for 7:30, but we did not have time to take that in. We took site 10 with a potential view of Denali and set up the tent. This was the first time tenting in a long time. Because of the bears, we were required to cook and store all food or smelly items at one of the two cook shelters. The locker was about twice the size of the pantry at home.

After dinner, we walked up the service road from the campground and found an opening in the brush with a full view of the Alaska Range, including Denali. I took one large format shot of the bottom half of Denali. The light was poor, but I had no idea if I would get that much the next morning.



There were several choices we would have to make for tomorrow morning. The two buses that brought us in would be leaving at 5:45 and 6:45 tomorrow morning to get through the landslide area at 8:00 am. The first of these would go out to the end of the road at Kantishna to pick up passengers from the lodges there. We could take that bus out to reflection pond where Ansel Adams took his famous photo

of Denali, but not knowing if there would be a view at all, and we would have to have a dry breakfast there. Then the walk back to the campground was 2.5 miles. That was a lot of ifs to consider as we went to bed in our tiny...tent.

53 Date: 8/5/2016

Time: 10:00 pm

Mileage: 39530

Location: Denali, Alaska

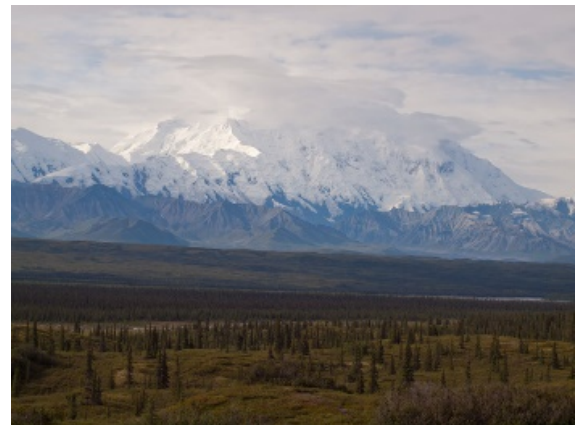
Wonder Lake and Back

Jill woke up about 2:00 am and looked out of the tent to see Denali fully viewable. She didn't wake me up as the light was too limited



for a photo. I woke and hour later and saw only fog. It was

still foggy when Jill got up at 4:00. Now she remembers why we like our Tine House on wheels. Getting dressed in a tent to walk a hundred yards to the restroom is not particularly convenient. About 5:00 am, it was still foggy and I could hear the beginning of a very light rain on the tent's rain fly. I opted for more sleep on the hard ground over a bus ride to sit at the reflection pond and eat a cold breakfast in drizzle and then not be able to get the



photograph I wanted.

We finally got up about 7:30 am and it was now raining enough that everything was wet. After getting dressed in the tent, we began moving everything to the cook shelter and proceeded to make breakfast.

As we ate our freeze-dried scrambled eggs with tiny chunks of bacon, we watched the sky and waited for the mountains to appear. There was no wind, so it took a couple of hours, but the rain finally stopped and the mountains began to show themselves.

We headed back up the service road and took some more large format photos. We got the bottom 60-70% of Denali. The light was still poor, so I will try to increase the contrast in the negatives during processing of the film. We walked on to the end of the service road, which took us to the wells, the water tank and a weather station on top of the hill. We were looking for ponds that could reflect Denali. Not finding any ponds, we returned to the campground.



We took the road down to the south end of Wonder Lake, all of about a ¼ mile. There were picnic tables there so we sat there and had lunch. When the light briefly got better, I shot some digital photos of the lake and a final large format of the south end of the lake. Besides the water starting to get choppy and the angle was wrong to reflect Denali, I just shot shoreline scenes.

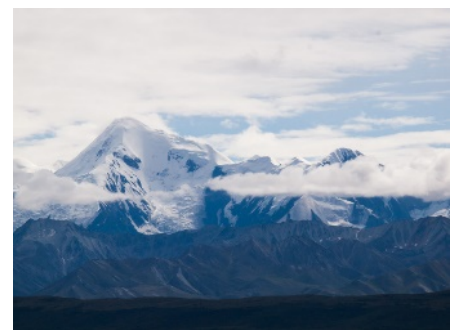


We again returned to the campground again. Since our bus was not scheduled to leave until 3:45 pm, we had time to do another hike. So, down the entrance road we trudged to the trailhead of the McKinley



Bar Trail. I had to abandon the jogging stroller at the trailhead as the trail was mostly only a foot wide. We hiked out to where the trail began to descend to the river, a distance of a ¼ mile. Jill's feet were hurting from her new boots and my legs were giving out, so we gave up and settled into the tundra for a snack.

We returned to the campground again and moved



all our gear to the amphitheater, because it is closer to the bus stop. We both took naps in the full sun, laying on the amphitheater log benches. The Park Ranger came by and we talked about our adventures of the morning. As for the McKinley Bar Trail, she said they need to change the name to the McKinley Trail. She said that 3 years ago the river moved over to the near bank and has now under cut the bank to the point that you can't get out on the gravel bar itself.



The bus that picked us up at 3:45 pm came through the landslide at 8:00 am (he got on duty at 4:00 am!) and the driver had to wait at the campground until 3:45 before he could start back. He said he got a little over 4 hours of sleep in the driver's trailer. We headed to Kantishna at a very brisk pace, finding every pot hole and adding to the washboard problems of the road. Since the road is only one lane wide, he had to go to the end of the road to turn

around. This is the furthest west you can drive in North America, without using a boat to get there. We picked up three people at one of the lodges, who had flown in early this morning. We stopped at the campground again to pick up four people that had ridden bicycles most of the way from the entrance of the park, about 83 miles.



Now for the run to the landslide. Again, it was a brisk run, only to be stopped by the Park Service about two miles from the landslide to wait the 20



minutes, until 6:00 pm to be permitted to pass. So we got off the bus and wondered around, mostly picking wild, ripe blueberries. The Park Ranger there, pointed out fresh wolf tracks in the mud. I had been watching for wolves on the way back, as that would complete the big 5 animals to see for us.

Finally, we were on our way again, being led by the Park Ranger through the landslide area. The bus driver said that everything looked the same



as it had been for the last several days, no work being done. The bus drivers don't like this day time lay-over run, because it makes for an 18-hour day, that they are only paid for the driving time and it mess up the next day too because of fatigue.

After a brief stop at Eielson Visitor Center to pick up more passengers, we headed for the entrance of the park. The light was great now clear and blue... and because of the time of day, with great shadows. Denali continued to show itself, now in all its glory.



The pace started out brisk, but then we started seeing wildlife. If it was a caribou at a distance, we kept going, but then animals began showing up close to the road, so we took some short stops to get pictures. I kept looking for wolves, to no avail. We did see 3 Ptarmigans, 2 Golden Eagles, caribou, of course, and a female moose at a distance. The light continued to improve, especially at Polychrome Overlook. We did another brief stop and I was finally able to get the shot that was always in poor light before.



We also saw the grizzly bear and then in Igloo Canyon, I think, I spotted something near a slump in the ground where I think we saw a caribou a few days earlier. It was too light and much smaller than a caribou too. I pointed it out to Jill and said loudly, "Is that a wolf?" The bus driver slammed on the breaks, took a look and confirmed that it was a wolf, only the 5th one he has seen this year.



There are not many wolves in the park only 47-50 (depending on the bus driver or ranger talk). It moved in and out of brushy areas, but mostly was in low tundra vegetation, so it was easy for everyone on the bus to see and the bus behind us also got a look at it.



About a mile later, we stopped to pick up some hikers on the road. One was photographing a grizzly bear below the road along the creek. We moved up the road to get a better view and watched as the bear fed on berries along the creek and then it proceeded to climb the bank up toward the back of the bus. It crossed the road behind our bus and front of the other bus and continued up the hill.



On we went, when we saw more Dall sheep, it was the closest view we had for them while visiting the park. Most the time they looked like little white rocks on green hillsides. These had legs. The Park was

originally set aside to protect the Dall sheep, not to show off the Mountain. Of course in the early years this also meant that the rangers killed wolves to protect the sheep. Wolf and sheep studies by people like Adolph Murie in the 1930s (many winters in the wild) later showed them the error of their ways. The fact that the park was set aside for wildlife is good because for most people who only have a short time in the park they don't see the mountain. Wildlife, if you take any of the buses is a sure bet (especially caribou).

We were dropped off at the visitor center parking lot at 10:00 PM. We threw our gear in the back of the Tracker, and drove down to Riley Creek Campground, a mile away. The first of three loops was full. We found several open sites in the second loop, but most were too short and often not very level. After driving through a puddle the size of our motorhome, we found a site. We disconnected the Tracker and backed both vehicles in and went to bed. Boy, does that bed feel good!



54 Date: 8/6/2016

Time: 9:00 pm

Mileage: 39530

Location: Denali, Alaska

Takin' it Easy at Riley Creek Campground

After a very long and busy day yesterday, we decided to take the day off to rest up for traveling tomorrow. So, we got up without an alarm clock. We started by bailing Sampson out of jail. He must have thought that is what happened to him. The kennel he was in was a cage with heavy wire door and walls and a concrete floor. He had access to a small yard, but evidence suggests he did not poop there. Then, we left him there for two whole days. His care giver said that he was a great dog and she would take him if we no longer wanted him. He can be quite the charmer. After putting him in the car, we had breakfast at the lodge where the kennel is.

Returning to the Riley Creek Campground, we spent the morning doing laundry and then had lunch and worked to catch up with the blog for the last two days. Since, they were adventurous days, the blogs were long. This blog will be short with only mundane stuff to take about.

One issue, is where do you dry a tent off in a small motorhome. It keeps raining, so we have to take it piece by piece, and spread the tent out to dry on top of the bed. At this rate it will take days. Oh for some dry weather. We ran the generator to charge up the house batteries and run the hair dryer after our showers and to microwave a couple of TV dinners. After dinner, we took in the evening program in the campground amphitheater. The topic was "Clean Mountain". The Park Ranger was awesome. Basically, the talk was about the history of mountain climbing Denali. Where the "Clean Mountain Program" comes from is the Park Service was taken to task for the dirty conditions left by previous climbing activity. They have since developed a very strict climbing management program to enforce the idea of "Leave No Trace". We learned a lot that we did not know about the hazards of this activity. The Ranger was very well versed in the topic as he is involved with in the program and does interpretive programs about it regularly. We really enjoyed the program.

55 Date: 8/7/2016

Time: 7:30 pm

Mileage: 39683

Location: Talkeetna, Alaska

Movin' On

Well, after 12 days at Denali National Park, we felt it was time to leave. We saw all the big animals and many of the small ones. We saw Mount Denali 5 days of the 12. We hiked several trails, camped inside and outside of the park and even in a tent. We brought the rain with us, of course. They said they broke all kinds of records for precipitation for the park.

So down the Parks Highway we drove. We turned off the highway and up the 14-mile spur road to Talkeetna. We had rain all day and after a brief lull at dinner, it is raining again. We walked to downtown Talkeetna looking for a place to eat and were

surprised by all the tourists wandering the streets like us. We ended up at a bistro near the RV park we are staying in. It was not crowded or noisy, and they had a covered patio that we could have Sampson sit at the table with up. He proceeded to put his head on the table, so we had a hard time making him lay down by the chairs on the gravel.

You may wonder about this off-the-beaten-path town having lots of tourists. It started as a gold rush trading post in 1896, but today it is the jump off point for most of the climbing expeditions to Denali. There are several flight services for taking climbers to the glacier at base camp to start the multi-week climb. One of the reasons it takes so long is that the Park Service does not allow the use of oxygen bottles on the climb to 20,310 feet. Therefore, everyone must climb in stages to allow time to acclimate to the lack of oxygen. Temperature on the climb are below zero on the mountain, even in the summer. The climbing season is from March to the end of July, although there have been successful climbs in the winter. In fact, after doing the first solo winter climb, a famous Japanese climber disappeared and they are still looking for him. They know he made it to the summit, because he left evidence there. Out of 1,600 attempts this year, 60% were successful. There were two fatalities, one from high altitude sickness and the other was literally blown off a ridge by 200 MPH winds.

This town is also a short train ride away from Anchorage, so even without the climbers it is a busy little place. Guess what it is raining again... Sigh. Still drying the Tent in the RV.

56 Date: 8/8/2016

Time: 7:30 pm

Mileage: 39788

Location: Eagle River, Alaska

Heading South

Went to the Flying Squirrel, a local bakery for breakfast. One interesting thing they had at the bakery was a ginger and rosemary sugar cookie. Very different and good. Finally, we got back on the road, heading south. We drove through the town of Wasilla, AK, the home of a past Governor, vice-presidential candidate, reality show participant and Fox news commentator, Sarah Palin. We completed the drive at Chugach State Park at Eagle River, AZ about 15 miles north of Anchorage, AK.

We registered for 4 nights (the most you can stay) and from here we will visit the areas north of and in Anchorage. After setting up the motorhome in the campsite, we went shopping. The list had gotten rather long, as most of the stores around Denali have very limited variety and quantity of goods to sell. So we spent a few hours wondering around in a Fred Meyers store. It was much like Walmart. We also went to the local Walgreens to get prescriptions filled. Then we found a shop that could do a lube & oil service on the motorhome as it is due and made an appointment for Friday when we leave the campground.

We also have been in e-mail communications with a friend in the BLM Alaska State Office, arranging dinner plans with him and his family. They just moved up here earlier this year from Phoenix, AZ. Weather? – Raining still!

Time: 7:15 pm

Mileage: 39788

Location: Eagle River, Alaska

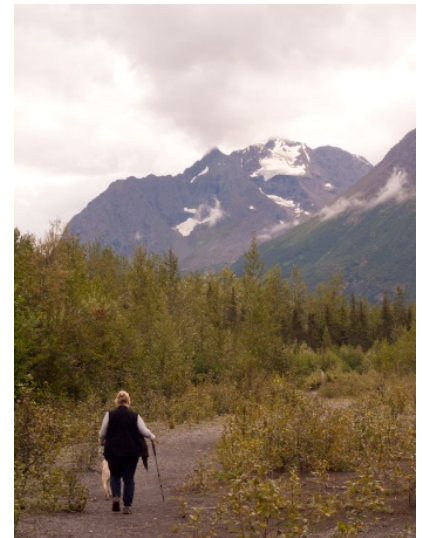
Sightseeing North of Anchorage

We started the day by going up the Eagle River Nature Center up the river from the Chugach State Park. Jill



planned to take the short loop, but somehow we got on the 3-mile Albert Loop instead. The trail took us mostly through boreal forest and then

out on to a gravel bar of the river. There was a closed section of the trail, but a bypass had



been “constructed” to get pass something that must have been totally impassable. The bypass portion was quite muddy and had lots of roots above ground. Because of the permafrost, all the vegetation keeps its roots in top foot of soil as it thaws. The soil is easily eroded, so the roots are left well above the soil on this type of trail. One part of the trail had a long walking bridge that crossed a shallow pond. We watched a Dipper hunting in the pond for food to feed to its noisy youngster.

There was also a family of mergansers and a pair of ducks I have not been able to id yet. I am now shopping for a longer lens for the Olympus DSLR.



Next we headed up to Palmer for lunch at the Noisy Goose along the Glen Highway. continuing up the highway we wanted to see what an app on her phone said was a great overlook. Unfortunately, the app was difficult to work and we didn't know how far it was initially. We got several miles up the highway, through a construction zone, before Jill was able to determine that it was still another 50 miles up the road. Since we will be taking the motorhome past there later this month, we

opted to turn around and find something else to look at. In the construction zone, we saw the turn off for the Musk Ox Farm we visited in 1995, so we turned in. We bought some Qiviut (Musk Ox fleece) in the little store. But since it had started to rain, we

decided against seeing the actual animals that produce the Qiviut. Jill bought some last time we were here, but has yet to spin it into yarn and make something. Maybe twice as much will get her spinning again.



On the way back toward the campground, we stopped at Eklutna to see the oldest church in the Anchorage area. When we paid our entrance fee,

we were asked if we would like a guided tour or just the written information. Jill opted for the guided tour as she was tired of reading everything for me.

The St. Nicholas Russian

Orthodox Church built in Knik about the 1740's. It was moved to its current location in 1900. A replacement church was built and went in to service in 1970 and is still in use today. The Russian Orthodox religion was brought to the native Alaskans by the Russian fur traders long before the area was sold to the US. There are 19 active parishes in Alaska today with many of the priests being native Alaskans.





There is an interesting graveyard associated with the church. Burial customs are a mix of Native and Orthodox beliefs. While the natives used to practice cremation, they used to bury the ashes and then shelter the grave site for a year with a blanket or "house" and provide items needed by or honoring the departed. Generally, after a set period of time the spirit is believed to have left the area and the small houses are left return to the soil. The Russian priests changed part of the custom, they required that the body remain, buried 6 feet under. The houses are usually painted in the native's family or clan colors. This came from the time when the natives didn't read or write so the colors were used to

identify one's ancestors. There are variations on this theme. The small cemetery had other people who were related to the natives who are also buried there. One more recent burial was for a hunter and he had a moose with his hat, instead of a house, another was someone who worked on the railroad, so rails and hand tools were part of his "house" (he was also Jewish).



58 Date: 8/10/2016

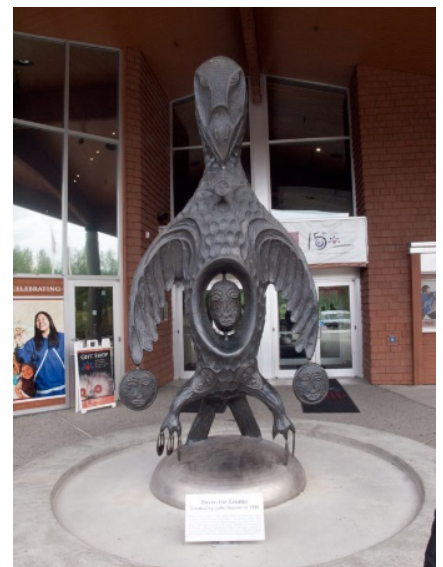
Time: 7:45 pm

Mileage: 39788

Location: Eagle River, Alaska

Sightseeing in Anchorage

We did some sightseeing in Anchorage today. First on the list, because it was on the north side of town and had a sign on the AK Highway 1, was the Alaskan Native Heritage Center. It initially seemed a little pricy, but after going through it, we decided it was very professional and well worth the price. It covered all the different Native groups and discusses the differences and common traits of each. There were lots of traditional artifacts with great discussions. They had an indoor auditorium where they demonstrated traditional singing and dancing, sports, etc. Outside, around a large pond, they had a number of traditional houses used by the various tribes in the past. They had guided tours of these buildings and also had native interpreters in each to explain the artifacts displayed.





We move on to downtown Anchorage to the Visitor centers and the Public Lands Room to gather literature and other

information on points of interest in Anchorage and down the Kenai Peninsula.



After lunch, went to Earthquake Park on the Knik Arm of Cook Inlet. There is a nice parking lot, paved and unpaved trails and a display of the Good Friday Quake of 1964. It was centered in Prince William Sound and registered 9.2, the largest recorded earthquake in North America. The devastation in Anchorage, Valdez and Seward was massive. The park area is the site of a huge landslide that happened during the 4-minute long quake. The interpretive trail leads through very lumpy terrain and the signage describes how the land moved hundreds of feet out into Knik Arm and dropped 40 feet.



We headed back into town to have a very nice dinner with our BLM friend Tom and his family.

59 Date: 8/11/2016

Time: 8:45 pm

Mileage: 39788

Location: Eagle River, Alaska

Hatcher Pass and beyond

It rained alllllll day again! Most the time just sprinkled. We drove the Hatcher Pass Loop from Palmer (Highway 1) to Willow (Highway 3) northeast of Anchorage. It crosses the Talkeetna Mountains. It is



a steep climb up and down with the Independence Mine State Historic Park located near the top of the pass. The Willow Creek mining district was set-up around 1890, but the Independence gold mine ran in the 1930's and up to



WWII. Several buildings like the Bunk Houses and other housing facilities have been restored, but the mill itself is rapidly decaying to a pile of rotting lumber on the hillside. In the early days, an aerial tram was used to transport the ore to the mill to be processed. Later a tunnel was constructed to bring the ore to the mill using ore carts on rails and this sped up the transportation and reduced costs. The mine ran two shifts year round. While the light was poor, I still shot a couple of large format photo in the rain, keeping the camera covered as best I could. Jill and Sam walked all over the place and she took some digital



photographs of the historic area.



The road from Palmer was paved to the State Park, but going over the summit



and down the other side to Willow was potholed dirt except for the last couple of miles and it was under construction. The delays were lengthy. Near the bottom of the Willow side, we crossed the creek on a bridge, but noticed an old abandoned bridge lost in the trees downstream. So we backed up and found the parking lot and shot a couple of photos.

Back late to Eagle River and our RV in the State Park Campground. Guess



what, it is still raining! Harder! Midnight sun...where?

60 Date: 8/12/2016

Time: 8:45 pm

Mileage: 39788

Location: Williwaw USF Campground, Portage, Alaska

Portage, we are rusting!

I now know why we don't see moose; we don't get up early enough. This morning we got up early to get the RV to the shop for an oil change. We were in the dump station, when mom moose and baby walked by. Because no coffee yet, I missed the photograph. After oil change and laundry completed, we headed towards Portage on Alaska1. When we just hit Anchorage, we got a call from Eagle River Walgreens, Les' meds were in! So we got off the



freeway(?) and Les took the Tracker back to Eagle River. We were parked next to the Air force base, and F14 jets, were taking off and practicing touch and go landings. They were LOUD, VERY LOUD! Couldn't hear my self-think. So went across the street to get coffee. The little drive-through place was called Bikini Espresso ... She didn't even have a good bikini on, it was quite the outfit or lack thereof. I decided I wasn't going to do business with a place that sold coffee with sex (they didn't have a male barista). JMA

The weather in Anchorage was cloudy, but no rain. That all changed when we started east along Turnagain Arm. It began to rain. The further east we got, the harder it rained. I figured that since it was Friday, all the locals would be taking up all the available campsites at Portage.

I was wrong, we found a lot of open campsites in the Forest Service campground at Portage. So we settled into site 59, put out the awnings so we could get out the door of the motorhome and still be dry. By now, the clouds had settled to the ground and we were in a steady drizzle.



We went to the visitor center on the edge of Portage Lake and it continued to rain. Looking out the windows of the visitor center at the lake, visibility was a few hundred yards and you could not see the back end of the lake where 21 years ago we could see the Portage Glacier. It didn't matter that the visibility was low, since the glacier has receded back up a canyon out of sight of the visitor center anyway. The visitor center itself is outstanding for the movie and the interactive displays. One of the best visitor centers I have ever seen. Just wish we could see the glacier from it, or even the back end of the lake. One bright note, Jill ran into an old friend, so I got a picture of her and Smokey.

Back at the camper, Jill had no phone service, but I had one bar and "E" (extended or very slow) cellular data

service. So I checked the weather app. Anchorage showed 10 solid days of rain. Then I lost all phone service too. Bummer! LDA

Note; it is so wet around here that my hat, which has a sweatband...is all wet. No I have not worn it outside. The sweatband is just picking up all the moisture in the Tiny House! JMA

61 Date: 8/13/2016

Time: 8:45 pm

Mileage: 39788

Location: Williwaw USF Campground, Portage, Alaska

Seeing what can be seen

We snuggled in bed and got up very late. It rained hard all night long and continues to rain. I looked outside the bedroom window to see if the river was taking over the campground, but it would appear the Forest Service did a good job with the drainage in the campground. We are not floating away yet. The people that live here may consider building an Arc. The river does appear to be up 2 feet from yesterday.

We had a biscuit breakfast and now we will head out to see what we can see. First stop is the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center at the intersection of Seward Highway



and Whittier/Portage Glacier Access Road. The place is part wild animal park, part rehab center. We saw Lynx, porcupine, wolf, moose, elk, both Black and Brown bears, Musk Ox, caribou, Sitka Black-tailed deer and Wood Bison. When we got to the wolf paddock, the only animal we saw was standing proudly to be photographed, but it looked like an Alaskan Husky. As I moved to change views, we found a sign saying the domestic dogs were added to the paddock to add to the size of the pack. When I looked back, I spotted the real wolves, with much longer faces.



The Musk Ox is native to Alaska, but they stand together in a bunch to ward off attack by the primary predator, thus making them very easy the entire herd easy to be killed off by the new predator, MAN. Therefore, they went extinct in Alaska. In the mid 1930's, 36 musk ox were brought from Canada to Fairbanks to start a bred and release program. Today, there are over 2,500 Musk Ox in the wild in Alaska.



When the Bering Land Bridge was available, several prehistoric animals past back and forth between Alaska and Siberia. The Steppe Bison was one of these species. It later adapted



to the changing climate after the last Ice Age to become the Wood Bison and as it moved down into the continental US, it then became the Plains Bison. The Wood Bison also went extinct in Alaska and most of Canada, but a small population was found in an isolated part of

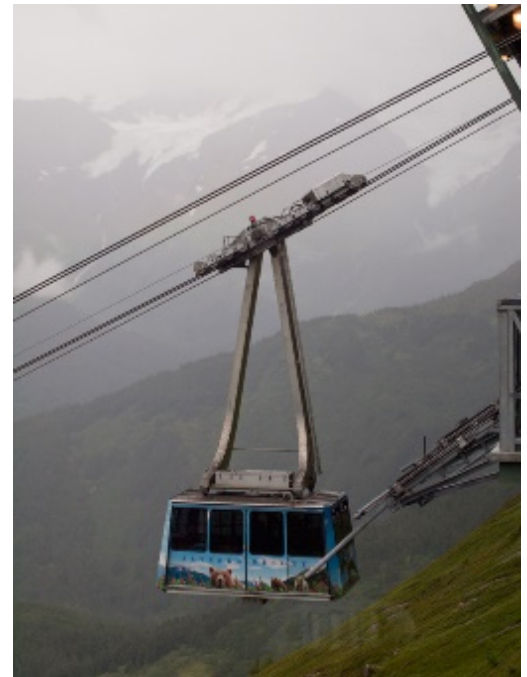


Canada. The Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center is at the center of the breed and release program for Wood Bison in Alaska. As we walked around the Bison paddocks, I kept looking for information about how the Wood Bison and Plains Bison differed. We finally found an interpretive sign indicating that the Wood Bison has a larger hump on the back and is better adapted to colder climates, and I believe the horns are a little straighter.

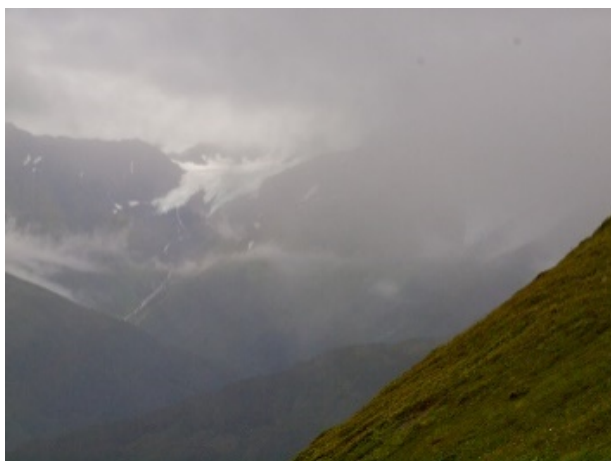
It is great to see good work this facility is doing. Many of the other animals here were rescued from the wild, mostly with serious injuries. The facility suffers from poorly designed parking and too much visitation.



From there we headed back toward Anchorage, turning up the 3-mile road to Alyeska Lodge and Ski Resort. We took the tram ride up



to the top (almost) of the mountain and had lunch while we watched the clouds dance among the peaks and glaciers. While eating lunch, the light got a little better and you could see the glaciers, but by the time we finished, the clouds had moved in again. We met a local that told us that this is the rainy season in Alaska. Their hot season is May and June. Well, that explains all the rain. After lunch, we started up the hill to the top of the ski lift, but only got about a hundred feet up when it started to rain again, so we opted for a tram ride back down.



We were not done for the day, we again headed west on Alaska Highway 1 to Bird Point. It is a very nicely developed parking lot with restrooms and interpretive displays along a really nice paved trail about 150 yards long. The only problem is the point and any potential photo spots are well beyond the

end of the trail and since the State Park does not own the point itself, there is no access. I guess people do watch for Beluga Whales here. We only spent a little time and when we left, the rain was starting again. It got heavier as we returned to the campground.

Jill and Sam took an evening walk, when the rain lightened, on the trails outside and around the campground. They did well, until one location was flooded from the river which is running very high. They returned very wet as, you guess it, it started raining harder again! Let's hope we catch a break in the weather tomorrow.

62 Date: 8/14/2016

Time: 8:45 pm

Mileage: 39788

Location: Williwaw USF Campground, Portage, Alaska

Through the Tunnel to Whittier, AK

We got up about our normal time after another night of heavy rain. After feeding the dog and cat, I took Sam out to do his business. I took the trash too, knowing I would need to go to the trash bin at the entrance of the campground. As I stepped outside, I noticed the pooling of water near our campsite. Before I got very far with Sam, I found the road to the entrance of the campground was under 4-6" of water, so we turned around. After breakfast, I took the trash and dog poop to the trash bin by Tracker. I found the trash bin was surrounded by 4" of water too, so I had to take off my shoes and socks and wade over to the trash bin. I was wondering why all the Alaskans were wearing knee high rubber boots everywhere, now I know.



We are planning to go to Whittier today, but I think I had better check with the campground host to see if they plan to close the campground today. We have already paid for tonight. The host said that the campground will still be here tonight, have fun in Whittier.

So off to the tunnel. Now in 1995 when we went to Whittier, we had to take the train. It went straight through the mountain from Portage to Whittier, with no change in elevation. Now days, when the train is not using the tunnel, cars, trucks, motorhome, etc. travel through the tunnel one way at a time. Cars cost \$13 round trip. The Parking permit at



Whittier is \$11 per day and you can get an annual pass to park for \$250. Whittier used to be a military base and there are no private residences there. Those that live there live in the one of the old barracks that has been converted to condos.



When we first came out of the tunnel, it was not raining and the clouds had lifted a lot. So I dropped Jill off to buy tickets for a boat ride. There were several to choose from and I went to buy the parking permit and park the Tracker. As I was loading up all the photo equipment we wanted to bring it began to rain. Jill called to remind me to bring the umbrella. That was just one too

many items for me to carry, so I drove back to where I dropped her off. We unloaded there and she watch over it all under the shelter while I parked the Tracker again.

Jill had chosen the Surprise Glacier Cruse that included a buffet Salmon and Prime Rib meal. We loaded up on the double decker catamaran about noon. As we headed out of the harbor, the clouds came down to the deck and it began to rain. Fortunately, they had provided several squeegees for cleaning the moisture off the windows, because as people went out to take pictures, they came in very wet and the windows fogged up. We headed out Passage Canal into Prince William Sound, turning north into Port Wells. We turned northwest into Barry Arm to stop at Surprise Glacier. On board, we had a Forest Service interpreter, who told us about the wildlife, the glaciers and the



1899 E.H. Harriman Alaska Expedition.



E.H. Harriman was a railroad tycoon, who's doctor ordered him to take time off from work and take his family on a vacation. He complied with his doctor's order, but took it a bit further. Along with his family, he chartered a ship and brought 100 of the top scientists of the time in a wide variety of fields. Harriman told the ship captain that if

any of the scientist wanted to stop to look at ANYTHING, that's what he wanted to do. John Muir was one of these invitees. At the hard left hand turn in Barry Arm, three glaciers came together forming a huge wall

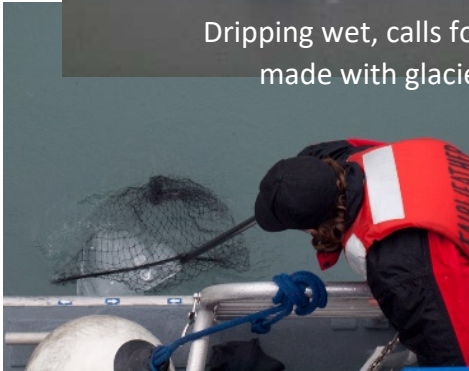


of ice. The captain didn't want to get too close to the ice, since he had already destroyed a prop on an underwater moraine. Muir and a glaciologist took the skiff and explored close to the ice wall and found a passage back to Surprise Glacier and Harriman Fjord.



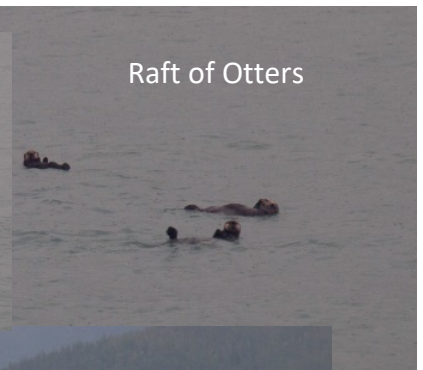
Dripping wet, calls for a drink
made with glacier ice

We spent about 20-30 minutes looking at Surprise Glacier and other glaciers in the area. About a minute after we left, Jill and others saw a piece of the glacier cav off (fall off). While at the glacier, the crew did some ice fishing. Jill had her birthday Margarita early, on the rocks, on real glacier ice rocks.



As we headed southeast out of the Barry Arm, we passed

a large raft of Sea Otters, well away from land. While the depth of the water in Port Wells is about 1000 feet, the otters were right over the terminal moraine that was only a little over 70 feet deep. So they were there feeding on the bottom.



Raft of Otters

The cruise when through Esther Passage between Esther Island and the main land. In the passage, we encountered "Wildlife, Other", a group of kayaker's that had been ferried to these quiet waters for some close-up encounters with the natives.

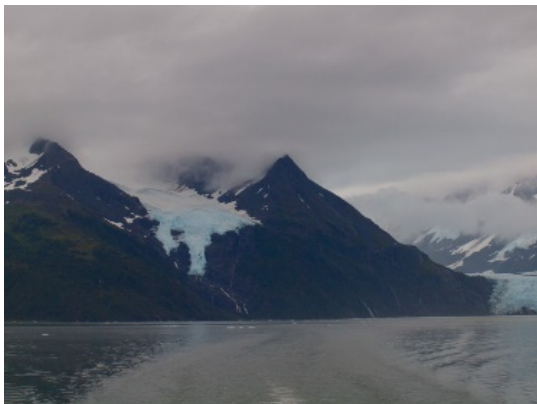
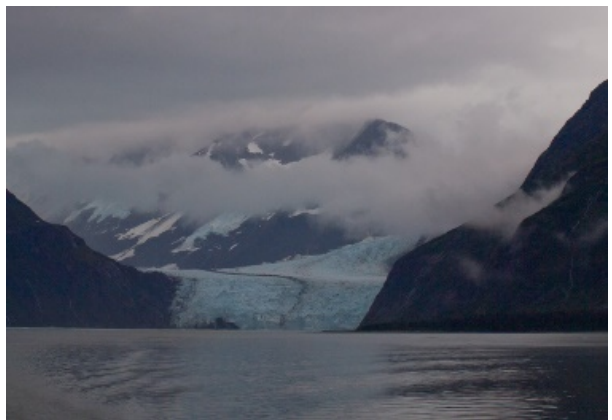


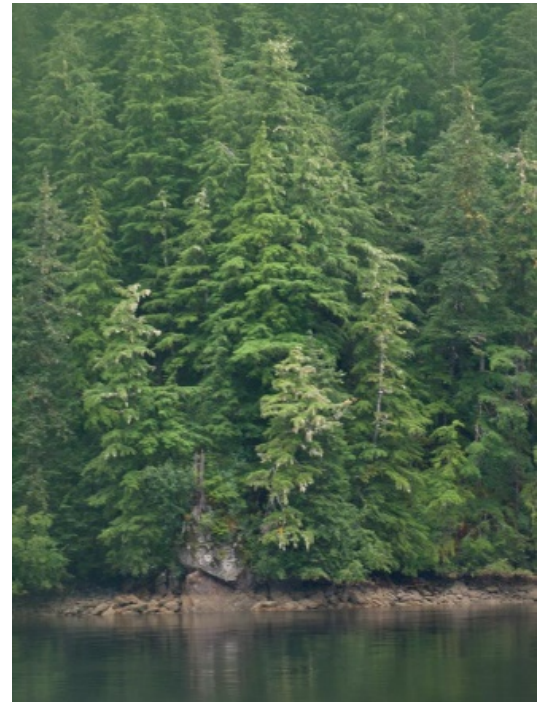
And Rock of Steller's Sea Lions

Near the end of the passage, we detoured to Egg Islands to see Sea Lions laying around on these barren rocks.

Passing around the south side of Esther Island, we stopped to see the largest Salmon fish hatchery in Alaska. They raise the salmon from eggs they fertilize to the size they need to be to leave fresh water and enter the ocean. Then they transport them to a variety of different streams to be released.

We returned to Whittier at 5:30 pm and when back through the tunnel in the 6:00 pm group. It was still raining in Portage and the water has continued to rise. It is about 10 feet from the motorhome now and the flooding across the main road is a bit more than this morning.





The fish hatchery



63 Date: 8/15/2016

Time: 4:00 pm

Mileage: 40033

Location: Baycrest RV Park,
Homer, Alaska

Seeking Sunshine.

We looked at the weather report yesterday, and rain everywhere, except Tuesday in Homer. So I got us a RV park reservation and we are off to Homer hoping for one day of sun! This is more miles than we like to do, almost 200! As we travel southwest we see more blue skies peeking out of



the clouds, dry pavement and a little sunshine. Hope for tomorrow.



Road work has slowed us down (powerline down 30-minute wait, then stop and go traffic, and slow going through 21 miles of construction zone). We can see Cook's Inlet to the west, but storm clouds to the SOUTH! Got in around 4:00 pm, saw the view from the site, added another night to our stay (Back-in, NO Way—Big Windows up front). Still cloudy, but there is some blue above. I might just paint here. JMA

64 Date: 8/16/2016

Time: 4:00 pm

Mileage: 40033

Location: Baycrest RV Park, Homer, Alaska

At Large in Homer, AK

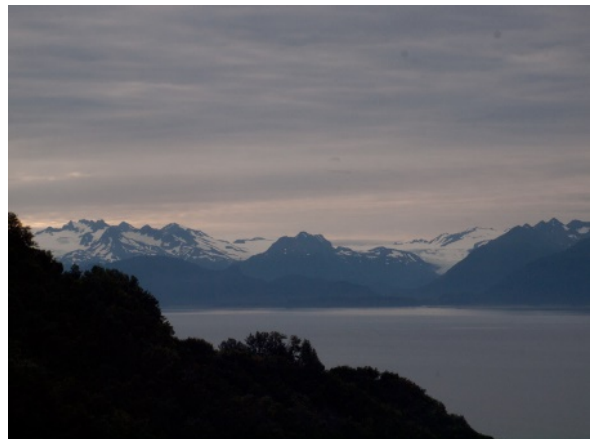
The weather was not exactly what I would call sunny, but at least it was not raining. We had breakfast in Homer and then went out to the Homer Spit to see how it had changed. There must be 8-10 campgrounds on the spit, along with several dozen businesses catering to fishing, hiking and other visitor services. There is a ferry terminal and a hotel at the end of the spit.

Thinking about fishing, lead us to the Anchor River about 20 miles north of Homer. We visited the State Park there and talked with fishermen coming off the river with empty creels. We went on to the end of the river road at the shore of Cook Inlet. Returning to Homer, we drove the Old Sterling Highway to see



what the rural country side looked like.

We made a wrong turn in Homer, we found ourselves on East End Road, heading up the west side of the Kachemak Bay. This road provides a great view of the glaciers across the bay coming off the Harding Ice Field. This Ice



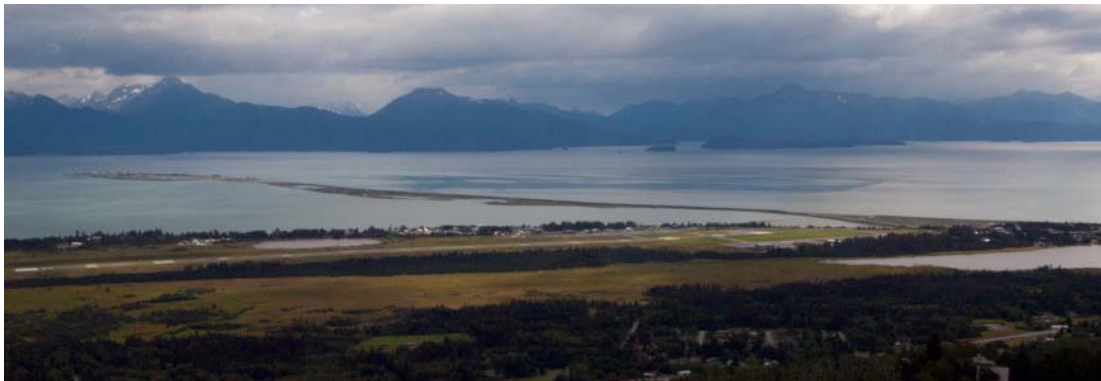
Field is larger than the Columbia Ice Field we saw in Jasper by about a hundred square miles. The pavement and road maintenance ended 20 miles north of Homer, but the dirt road continued. We went another two miles and then parked where the road got narrow and started to descend sharply. We only went down around a couple of turns until we could see the beach below where the road ends. Jill "asked" me "You don't want to go any further down, do you." So we turned around and got back in the Tracker and headed back to town. On the way back, we saw several women in very long dresses. They are part of Voznesenka, one of three remote communities started in 1968 by 5 Russian families, seeking a place to live without persecution for their "Old Believers" faith in the Russian Orthodox Church.



After lunch in Homer, we went to a store called Nomar. The store carries sports gear, clothing and camping equipment. They also make many items including bags, packs, etc. I brought in my Camera Pack for the large format camera. The tripod is held to the center of the back of the pack, but I don't like how it is attached. We showed the owner, Tad, how it was attached. We left the pack with Tad to have him work on it.

We went to the True Value Hardware store, then to the Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies nearby and finally out to the Homer Spit again to look for the Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies out there. It was a tiny yurt back behind other buildings, but the interpretive program was canceled. So we got an ice cream cone and were in the water taxi office when Tad called me. So back to Nomar to pick up the camera pack. Jill spotted a problem with part of Tads work, so after explaining how it would not work the way Tad had changed it. He understood the problem and came up with a new solution. But the day was ending and Tad had to go home and would not be back until Thursday. So we left the pack again and will pick it up when Tad is finished.

We went to Homer Visitor Center to get more information. We found that some of the things we were interested in would not work, but others could work. So that was the end of the day getting to see Homer and we went back to the motorhome for dinner.



Time: 4:00 pm

Mileage: 40033

Location: Baycrest RV Park, Homer, Alaska

Seeking Sheltered Sight Seeing

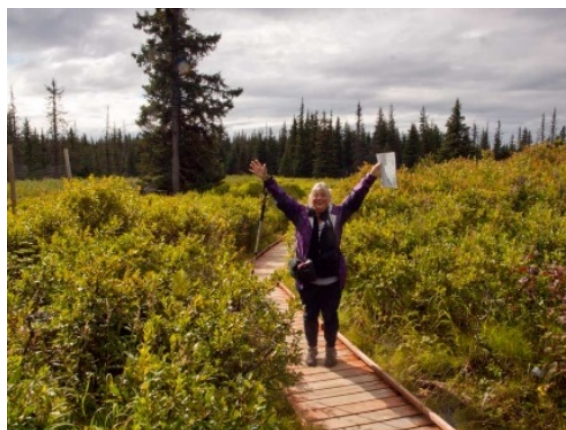
We woke up to rain today. Can't see the far side of the bay. We will go to museums today and if the weather clears some, a walk for Jill and Sampson. We first went down to the spit to make reservations for a water taxi for tomorrow.



sign...moose poop and tracks. While walking the Sun came out for a second or two. I dance on the walkway.

Tired, we headed back to the RV, of course now the sun comes out for good. As we sit in the RV we watch a Bald Eagle soar below us. We feel he is teasing us; we can't get a shot of him. The evening light is great and we are enjoying our view out our front window. It is nice sometime to slow down and watch the world around us.

We started our touring started at the "Islands and Oceans the Visitor Center for the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. Very interesting and well done center. I really liked the tide exhibit which shows the level of the tide. Blue lights tide coming in...Green light tide is going out. The bay has one of the largest tide changes in North America. From VC parking lot we took a walk down to the Beluga Slough. It was pouring rain, so we stopped at Three Sisters Bakery on our way down for lunch. The rain slowed and we walked the Bishop Beach. We then went up to Carl E. Wynn Nature Center to walk another mile trail. This one is on the top of the ridge above Homer, and it crosses a bog and through willows. We are warned to watch for Mom Moose and calves (no Sam, allowed). No Moose but lots of



Time: 4:00 pm

Mileage: 40033

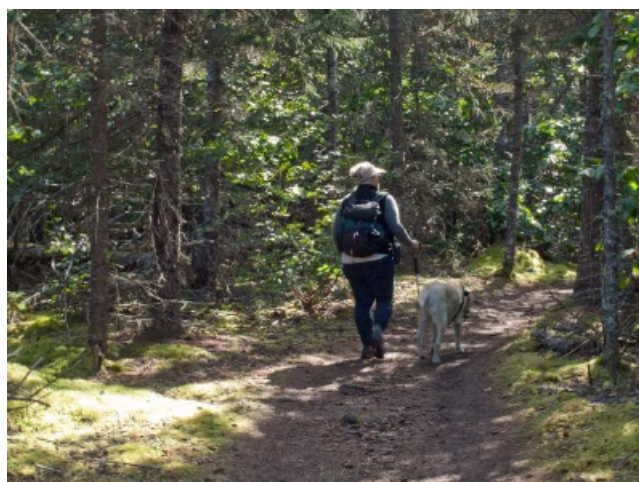
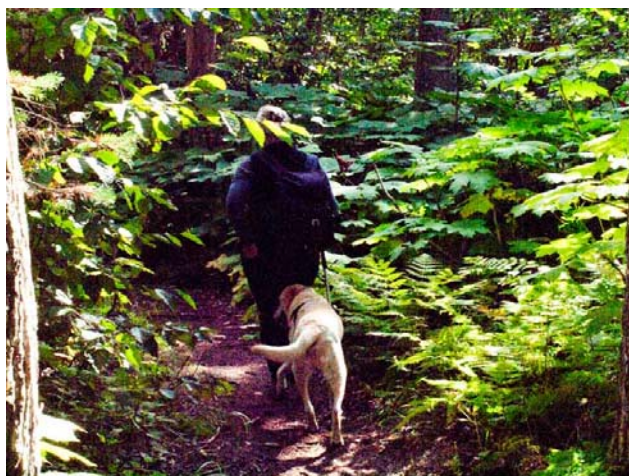
Location: Baycrest RV Park, Homer, Alaska

Hiking to Grewingk Glacier Lake

We got up around 7:00 am, ate breakfast and headed to the Homer Spit. The sun was OUT and it was looking great to take a hike.

We had a reservation for a water taxi to take us across the Kachemak Bay to be dropped off on Glacier Spit in Kachemak Bay State Park. We, including Sampson, hiked Glacier Lake Trail to Grewingk Glacier Lake. Sampson impressed the others on the water taxi with how easily he jumped on to the boat and then hiking on the trail. On the way across the bay, the taxi stopped for a close up very of a couple of sea otters.

The trail started out on gravel spit, moved into a boreal forest and then became a spruce forest before arriving on the terminal moraine of the glacier.





Grewingk Glacier is an alpine glacier, which means it does not reach the ocean as a tidewater glacier does. Grewingk Glacier terminates into the east end of the lake. There were a bunch of "Growlers" or small ice bergs that have caved off the glacier. The growler shapes are all unique and often quite beautiful.

By the time we reached the lake, the clouds were moving in. I took a bunch of digital photos, while Jill stayed back

where the trail met the lake. When I returned to her rock, she was drawing the scene of the lake, glacier and the surrounding mountains.

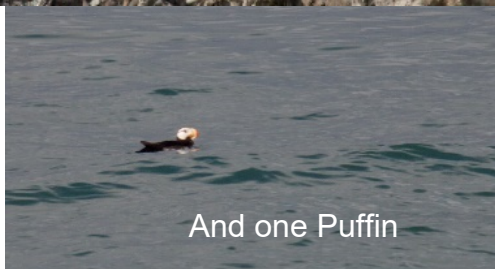
It started getting cold after the sun completely disappeared, so we packed up and started up the trail. We took a different trail (Saddle Trail) back to the shoreline to be picked up at 4:30 pm. On the way back to Homer, we took a quick stop at Gull Island. This is a set of 4 rocky islands that is the nesting ground for thousands of gulls, cormorants, murrelets, puffins, etc.



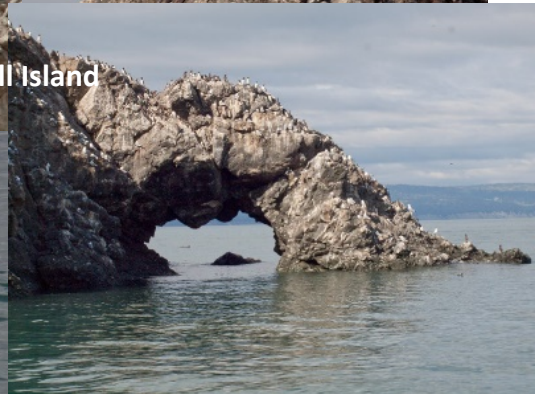
After eating a seafood dinner in a restaurant on Homer Spit, we returned to the motorhome. The sun was out again.



Gull Island



And one Puffin



Time: 4:00 pm

Mileage: 40201

Location: Waterfront Park, Seward, Alaska

Jill's Birthday

We slept in, went out for breakfast, then shopped for Jill's present. We had to pick up my camera pack from company called Nomar where they improved the attachment of the tripod bag. While there Jill found a new bag to hold her watercolor sketching materials, but it had only a shoulder strap and she wanted belt loops. The gal at

Nomar said no problem I can add belt loops, so she did. Then we found the shoulder strap was not removable, so the gal modified that too. They were great, now Jill has new red bag, the bag lady is happy.



Returning to the RV park, we dumped the tanks and got on the road towards Seward, AK. It's cloudy day, with sprinkles now and again. So not much to photography. At the intersection of the Sterling Highway and Seward Highway, we found a shallow lake nest to the road with a pair of Trumpeter Swans on it. There were also Lesser Scalps right next to where we stopped to take pictures.

We are open view people, so we drove right by one RV park because it was deep in trees. We thought because this RV park doesn't have anyone, we wouldn't have trouble getting site in Seward even though it is 5:30. Silly us. The City of Seward has a rather large campground(s) on the shore of Resurrection Bay. The place is packed. It is something of a parking lot, but we found one last site overlooking the lower lot, the bay and a couple of trees. Only half the sites have electric, and we aren't in one of those. So generators are going all around us and everyone has a campfire. Actually, it kind of fun watching everyone, we think a lot of the people are down for the weekend from Anchorage. Lots of families with kids.





We went to the Office of Major Marine Tours to see about a boat tour of the Kenai Fjords National Park. This is the same company that we got the Surprise Glacier Tour from out of Whittier. Since we took that tour, this one is 20% off. Then, we went to dinner and for Jill's birthday we had Crab Legs and Tiramisu cheese cake (Jill's choice...still sharing meals). Then because Jill had not meet her step goal, we took a walk along on the paved trail along the shore (she really pushes the Birthday thing). We ended

at the start of the Iditarod Trail. This isn't where they start the race, it is where the Historic trail started for the dog teams which supplied the Gold seekers in 1910 up in central and western Alaska.

68 Date: 8/20/2016

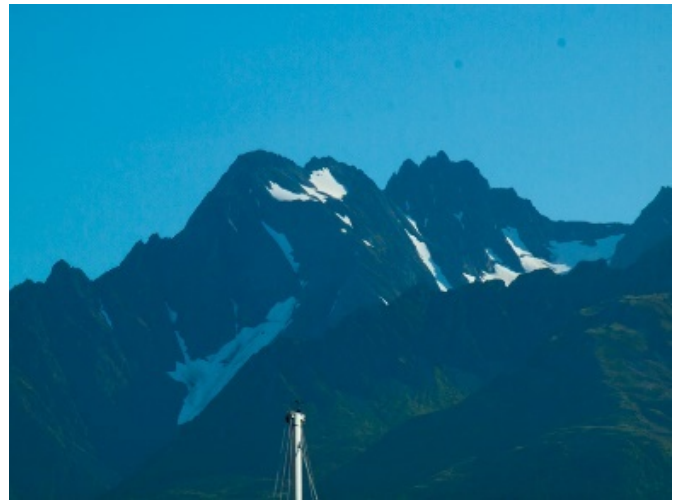
Time: 4:00 pm

Mileage: 40201

Location: Waterfront Park, Seward, Alaska

Glaciers Galore

Well the weather forecast got it wrong again they said it would be partly sunny in the morning going to full overcast by 5:00 pm. So we set the alarm for 7:00 am and got up a half hour later. It was glorious, hardly a cloud in the sky. We got tickets for the 6-hour tour (no 3-hour tour for us) of Kenai Fjords with Major Marine Cruises.



We were supposed to check in at 10:45 and that was a 20-minute walk from our campsite. We had breakfast in the motorhome and about 9:00 am, Jill said OK, let's go. I told Jill we had plenty of time, but we left anyway. Five minutes later, Jill said she thought she left her tablet in the motorhome and I said, we have time to go back for it, but she said no. So we checked in and got our boarding passed and meal passes and instructions how to find the boat. As we had time to wait, we toured the local hardware store across the street and looked at binoculars, and

then sat on a bench to wait for the tour. Finally, Jill realized how early we were and said we should go back and let Sam out one more time, but now it was 10:17 and the round trip would take 40 minutes and we would be late. Poor Sam had to hold it all day!



When 10:45 arrived, we went to the dock and boarded the boat, giving our boarding passes to one of the crew. The boat was the largest boat we have been on so far this trip, with two seating decks, and observation decks on the front, the back and the top.

On the way out of the harbor we saw a Bald Eagle. Heading south in Resurrection Bay, we followed close to the cliffs on the east side and saw lots of shorebirds (gulls, puffins, etc) and another bald

eagle. We passed through the channel between Fox Island and the main land before turning west to go around the south end of the Aialik Peninsula. We also found out why the campgrounds are so full. This weekend is the last two days of the Silver Salmon Fishing Derby. Jill saw a huge salmon next to the boat. I don't think they would let us troll for salmon on the tour. We also saw glimpses of porpoises around the same time. Maybe they are trolling for salmon?



We then turned north and continued up to the Aialik Glacier. This is a tidewater glacier, which means it calves into the ocean water. The fjords and land in the area is part of Kenai Fjords National Park. We had a National Park interpreter on board talking about the glaciers, the wildlife and the park itself. The glacier is a mile wide at the water and was quite active for the 25 minutes we spent about a quarter mile in front of it. The boat motor was turned off most of the time, so you could hear the glacier

move, crack and calve. We must have seen about a dozen small calving events. The boat was surrounded by lots of very small ice bergs.

After leaving for Seward, we saw about 3 hump-back whales at a distance, but mostly the boat sailed quickly to port. All day there was a smaller boat following us. They were filming a commercial for the tour company. Maybe we will be in it...waving to the

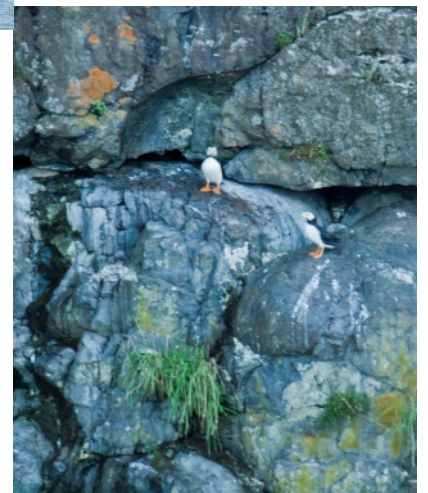
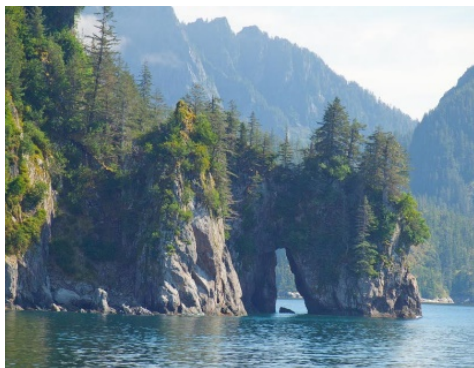
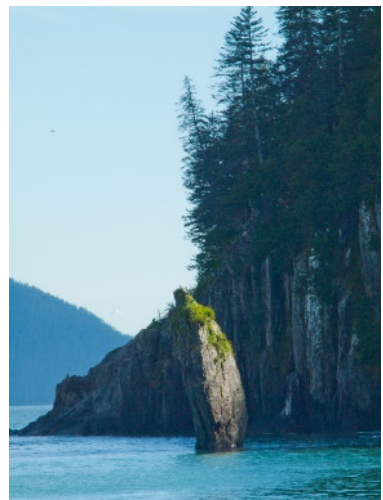
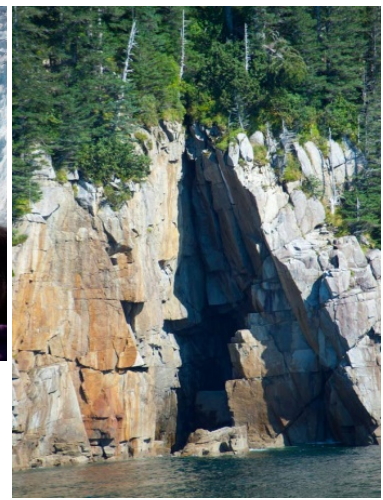
smaller boat. The problem we had with the weather forecast was that it was SUNNY ALL DAY! AWSOME!

Since tomorrow it is supposed to rain, when we got back to the motorhome, we picked up Sampson (walked him) and we drove out of town to Exit Glacier, about 20 minutes away. Unfortunately, this glacier is also in Kenai Fjords National Park and Sampson had to wait in the car while Jill and I hiked the mile to the end of the glacier.



Since the glacier points northeast, I knew that if the sun was still up, I would be photographing into it. So I left the large format camera in the car. Sure enough, I had the sun in the shot of the glacier. If it is sunny tomorrow morning, I will go back with the large format camera, now that I know what to expect. After eating out again, Jill complained that I walked her legs off, but she did make and exceed her step goal for the day. We are both beat!





69 Date: 8/21/2016

Time: 7:30 pm

Mileage: 40201

Location: Waterfront Park, Seward, Alaska

"Sitting on the Dock of the Bay, ♫..."

Awoke to rain, and everyone pulling out. So we moved our rig to one of the sites right on the shore, with electric and water. OOPs, bumped the rental motor home in the site behind us while pulling out. Didn't do any real harm to them, but dented our bumper. No one in motorhome, but left note anyway.



Actually having a fun day watching the rain on the bay, the boats and otters pass by our tiny home. It was time to do the laundry, so we went to the only laundromat in town. They had a fire last night and were handling their commercial washing in the public side of the business, tying up the whole place. It got crowded for a while, but by the time we finished, the place was almost empty.

We walked to the harbor to get Jill and Sampson their exercise. It was not raining when we left, but we were drenched before getting back to the motorhome.

70 Date: 8/22/2016

Time: 7:30 pm

Mileage: 40201

Location: Waterfront Park, Seward, Alaska

Alaska SeaLife Center

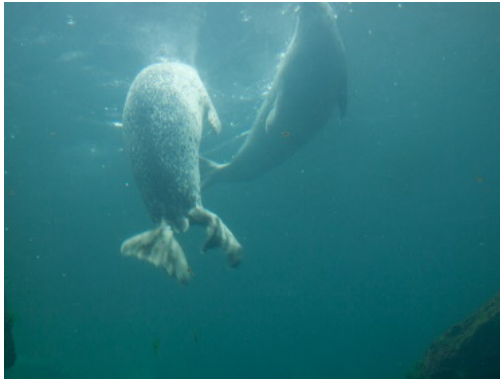
Awe, to wake to the gentle sound of rain on the roof, we must still be in Alaska! The one over the air TV station mostly shows NBC and the weather report for this morning indicated that most of southern Alaska will have rain until Thursday. Since we still have a few things we can do here in Seward, we bought another night of camping.



We sat around until about 12:30 pm, me reading a book and doing the dishes and Jill paying the bills. Then we decided to walk up to the Alaska SeaLife Center about a mile south of the campsite along the Iditarod Trail past Mile Zero. We bundled up because it was raining a little and we took Sampson. When we got there, we leashed Sampson to the end of the bike rack next to a tree that seemed to provide shelter from the rain, and went inside.

The center is relatively new. It was funded by grants and money from the Exxon Valdez spill to study the sea life of Prince William Sound. In addition to being a wildlife rescue center, it includes lots of interpretive displays, large tanks and enclosure for birds, mammals, fish and invertebrates.

It was impressive to see the Steller's sea lions and Harbor Seals up close. They were all very active, swimming and coming out on the rocks to talk with everyone.



The aviary with a large pond and cliffs was loaded with a good variety of aquatic birds. There was a sign on the door as you entered



saying not to touch or feed the birds. We really did not expect the birds to be all that close. But while standing at the rail, taking photos of horned puffins, we realized that one was slowly walking towards me. It got about 2 feet from me. Then I turned around in time to watch another puffin walk past me on the rail I was leaning on, just inches away. I guess these birds aren't afraid of humans, that must be why they can't be released into the wild.



After an expensive trip through the gift shop, we went back upstairs to see the tide pools that we missed on the first pass. They had 2 large tanks with a variety of star fish, urchins, etc. and they allow visitors to touch. We were about ready to leave when I got a phone call from an Alaskan phone number. The caller asked if I was Les Allert and did I have a dog named Sampson. Answering yes to both questions, the caller told me he was with the Alaska SeaLife



Center. I told him that we were still there and told him where Sampson was tied up outside. So he said OK and ended the call. When we got outside, Sampson was still tied to the bike rack, but had apparently played on someone's sympathies, because he was now wearing an old dog blanket. We are such mean dog owner's...allowing a waterdog to get wet. We walked back after having coffee/hot coco at a local café. Didn't really rain on the way back, until after we got back to the RV.

71 Date: 8/23/2016

Time: 8:15 pm

Mileage: 40328

Location: Anchorage, Alaska

We're Beyond Hope

Still raining lightly in Seward and fog on the water is adding fog horns to the morning environment to the waterfront. We topped up the fresh water and dumped the holding tanks as we pulled out of Waterfront Park. We started back up Seward Highway. We had spots of sun light peek through to light up the mountains and sometimes even the road.

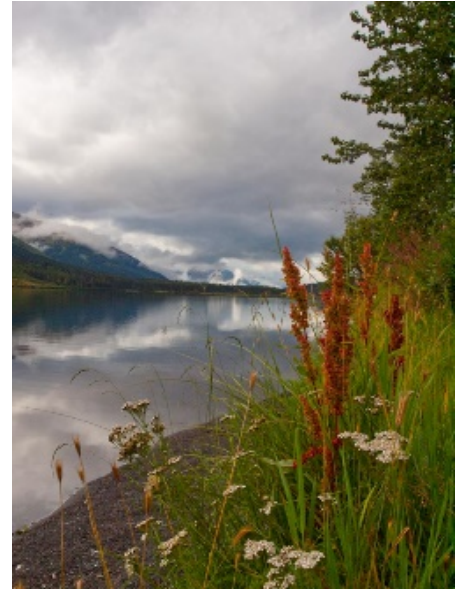
Part way back to the north end of the Kenai Peninsula we turned off at Hope Junction. We parked in a parking area near the intersection and unhooked the Tracker. Hope, Alaska is about 16 miles down this road, so we drove the Tracker to the end of the road, but did not find

the town. Turning around (along with 2 other cars), we found the town on a side road. We walked out to the point across a marsh area. The beaten path was a muddy track and trying to walk on the grass next to the track had water standing to a few



They really need a boardwalk. We saw salmon (mostly dead or dying), and Sandhill Cranes, and some sun.

Back to the car, Jill decided that she needed to walk Sampson to get him dryish before he got into the car. I didn't see which way she went at the end of the road. So I drove the wrong way, but figured out she had gone the other way, so I found the





other end of the road she went down and found her in front of the town's history center. We toured the center, which included a number of log buildings that had been moved to this location. The town itself is mostly old log buildings that are still in use. Many don't appear to have been changed much on the outside.



After eating lunch in Hope, we returned to the intersection with Seward Highway to hook up to the motorhome. So on toward Anchorage we continued. We gassed up both vehicles at Costco and bought a few things inside.

We found a campsite at the City's Centennial Park with electricity. This is a nice campground with real campsites, not an expensive parking lot for RVs like every other private camp in Anchorage. The main issue is that there are lot of people in tents and tarps with lots of stuff...

Reminds me Lake Mendocino's Che-ka-ka Campground. But nice enough for one night. After dinner, we went out again, this time to Best Buy, Pet Smart, and a nail salon for Jill.

72 Date: 8/24/2016

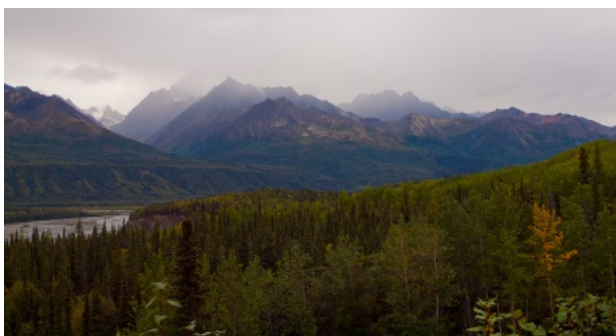
Time: 8:15 pm

Mileage: 40492

Location: Tolsona, Alaska

Fall Colors Begin

I was up until midnight last night because Microsoft pushed up a huge update to Windows 10 and it took at least an hour for it to install, but it appears to be working fine. There are lots of obvious changes in the interface and it will take tie to figure them out. Yesterday, we bought another subscription to Kaspersky Virus scanner and I installed it this morning.

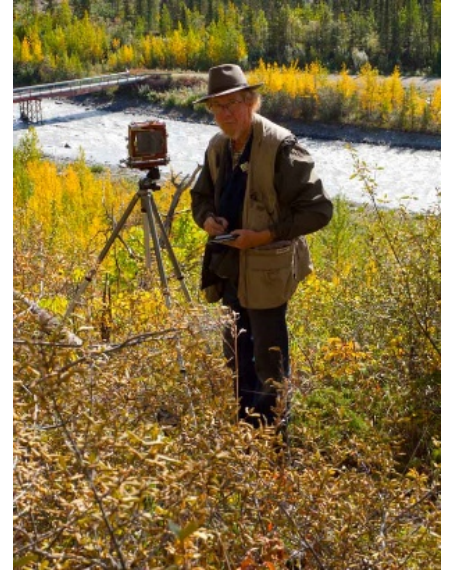


We headed northeast this morning from Anchorage toward Glennallen. The day started out heavily overcast with some showers. As we drove Glenn Highway, the clouds began to thin out and the



some overlooks to see the glacier.

showers ended. By the time we reached the State Park turn out for Matanuska Glacier, the sun was beginning to break through. We ate lunch in the motorhome in the parking lot and then took the trail out to



With the sun out, I took my large format camera with me and actually took two photos. Since we are now seeing fall colors in the trees, one of the photos was using color film. By the way, Jill and I are both taking digital photos and many of the better digitals were taken by her.



We found a private campground several miles west of Glennallen, AK. Unlike most private campgrounds this one is laid out like a government campground, NOT a parking lot. Our campsite is on the edge of Tolsona Creek and has electricity and

water. What was totally unexpected was that we actually got two TV stations over the air.



Trail Marker's old CD on trees and old shoes in the trail?

Before dinner, we took a hike from the campground to the Mud Volcanos. The trail, such as it was, was under developed through a bog. There were alternate trails that people walking the trail



created to bypass the muddy spots. The mud volcanos appear to be a series of artesian springs. The water appears to contain something that is poisonous because, there is no vegetation on the area containing the mud volcanos and all the trees at the edge are dead.



73 Date: 8/25/2016

Time: 1:30 pm

Mileage: 40568

Location: Chitina Airport, Alaska

Happy Birthday NPS

It's raining again. We left the wilderness campground and stopped in Glennallen for fuel and breakfast. Turning south on Richardson Highway, we had intended to go to Valdez. We stopped at the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park visitor center. This is the largest National Park at over 15,000 square MILES. It turns out today is the NPS 100th birthday. So the Park Service was serving cake and ice cream, along with coffee, tea and hot chocolate. We watch the movie and looked at the displays, stamped our NPS passport book and talked with the rangers at the desk. The destination of Valdez was just put on hold.



NPS Visitor Center in Chitina

So we headed south once more, but at mile 82, we turned east on the Edgerton Highway to Chitina. We had to fight for a campsite at the Wrangell View RV Park at the airport (Not). Of the 11 RV campsites, we are the only ones here.



RV Park, only us...



Chitina itself, 5 miles to the east. At 3 miles from the town, we found "Three Mile Lake", and didn't think too much about the name. At two miles from the town, we found "Two Mile Lake", and I asked is there a "one Mile Lake?". Sure enough at one mile from the town we found "One Mile Lake", go figure!

In town, we visited with the lonely Park Ranger at the NPS visitor center and stamped out NPS Passport book. She gave us a lot of information and a walking tour map of the Kennecott Mine area. It is located another seven miles beyond the town of McCarthy, which is 58 miles east of our campsite. But the rest of this story will have to wait until tomorrow.



Copper River,



We also stopped in an art gallery and bought a couple of things. We then drove the O'Brien Road that replaced the old railroad to Cordova. The road becomes a rough dirt road next to the Copper River and ends at a parking lot/fishing access. Beyond that there is a narrow bridge crossing O'Brien Creek and it continues to follow the railroad grade, but nothing larger than an ATV is permitted. We think we may have bicycled this trail in 1995.



Iron Ranger...

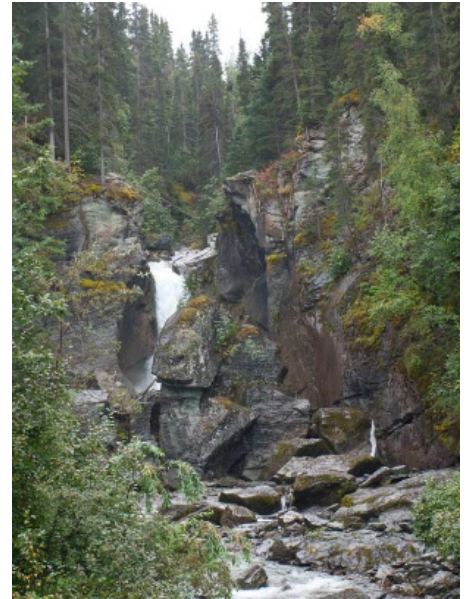
Pay here for camping?



Upon returning to Chitina, we continued to the east, passing through the narrow railroad notch and drove out to and across the bridge over Copper River. On the other side of the river, we checked out the campground and the dispersed camping on the gravel bar at the confluence of the Copper and Kotsina Rivers. There are a number of fish wheels out there, but they are not operating, because no one can get to them of the vehicles that are stuck there. The Kotsine River is currently flowing high and has cut off access.

We returned to Chitina and headed west about ten miles to a State Recreation Area that consists of a few camp sites, a small bridge, and the picturesque Liberty Falls. I stopped on the bridge and took a few digital photos of the falls, just like in 1995.

We returned to camp and went down to the river below the airport. We had heard there were fish wheels in use there. No one was around, but 3 were actually running, so I shot some video with my phone. Back at camp, we ate dinner and packed up the camping gear and food for tomorrow (last hint).



74 Date: 8/26/2016

Time: 8:00 pm

Mileage: 40568

Location: Chitina, Alaska

McCarthy Road...is melting in the Rain..

We are abandoning Tatanka and the cat and heading 58 miles out to McCarthy on a road that the Milepost Guide says "is recommend for those who like adventurous driving." It is NOT recommended for large vehicles. We had packed camping gear, cameras, clothes and Sampson, planning to stay over night at a campground at the end of the road. The sun was shining, but clouds and fog dancing among the peaks.



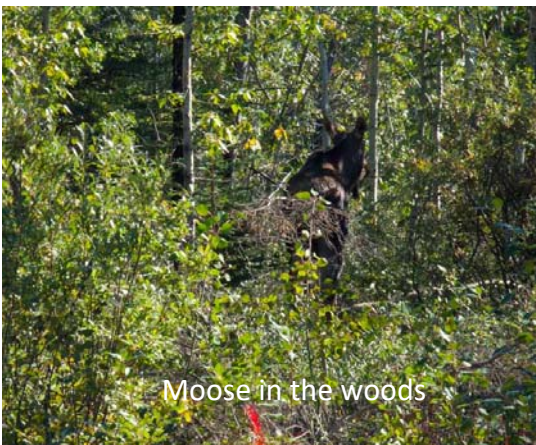
The road followed the old railroad grade to Kennicott Mill. We went throught the gap at Chitina, crossed the Copper River on the modern bridge and climbed the hill. The

hill climb is dirt normally, but today it was slick mud with numerous mud slides off the high side. This is common for this part of the road so they have never tried to improve it. Once on top, the road is paved for the next 16 miles. It does have frost heaves and pot holes thou. We crossed the Kuskulana Bridge high above the river of the same name. It was the only steel bridge on the road as it was for the railroad. It is only one lane wide, but is great condition, just don't look down while



crossing. The road became dirt after the bridge with lots and lots of pot holes. The speed limit is 35 MPH, but there were only a few places I could get the Tracker up to that. We dropped down to the little bridge crossing the Gilahina River. The railroad crossed on the wooden trestle. It is mostly there, but you would not want to drive it. We drove on, dodging pot holes to the end of the road.

At the end of the road is a modern foot bridge crossing the Kennecott River. There are two spellings of Kennicott (Kennecott). Both spellings are used for different things here. McCarthy is a half mile beyond the foot bridge and the Kennicott Mill is 7 miles beyond. There is a van running every half hours that will take you to the mill for \$5 each way. We decided to walk to McCarthy, but only got up to a hundred yard up the road before finding a female moose stripping leaves from the trees next to the road.



A van came by and scared the moose away and we went back to the end of the bridge to get the ride. But this van was from the Kennicott Glacier Lodge and the Wrangle Mt. Air shuttle arrived a few minutes later. There was no room for my camera stroller on the shuttle so I went to Kennicott in the Lodge van. But that van could not take Sampson, so Jill and Sampson road the shuttle up. We ate lunch at the Lodge before touring the mill site.

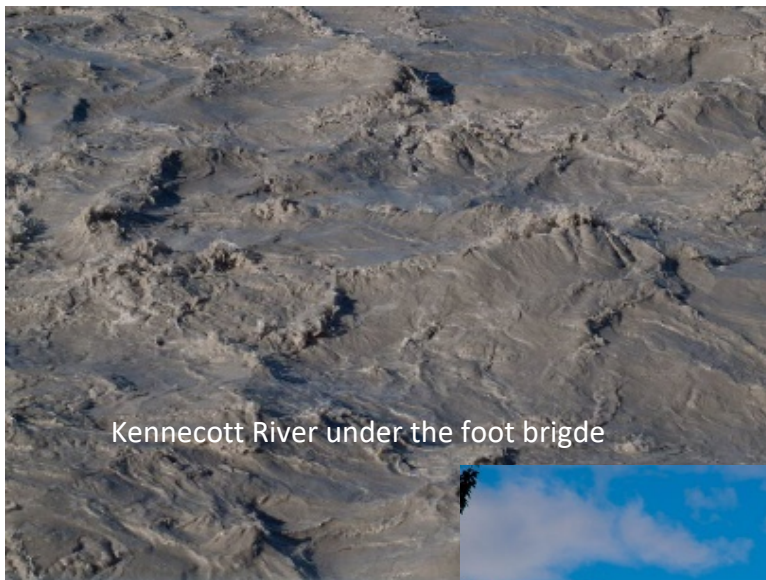


When I started setting up the large format camera, Jill and Sampson headed into the mill area with the digital camera to scout for photo ops. She looking in all the buildings and walked most of the trails. We talked over our radios about the muddy conditions on the trails. I ended up taking photos along the main road through the mill site. One of the park ranger took my picture and said she would put it on the park's Facebook. Of course, no one can recognize me as I am under the dark cloth.

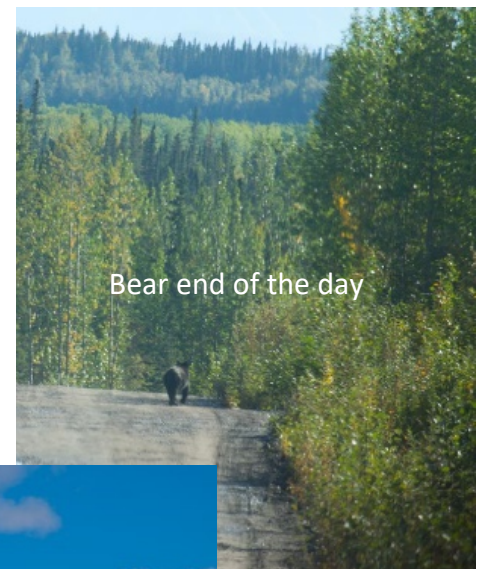
Jill checked the next day, but did not find it. Sampson made lots of friends, included a park ranger. This is the most tolerant National Park when it comes to dogs. The only thing he was not allowed to do was go into building and on tours. In fact, there were a number of dogs off leash in the area.



At 5 pm, we caught a shuttle back to the foot bridge. I remembered that I could remove the tires from the camera stroller to make it fit. On the way back to the foot bridge, we saw a Black Bear on the road. Back at the car, we gave the thought of sleeping on the ground a little consideration, very little consideration and opted to drive back to Chitina and sleep in Tatanka with Cinamon.

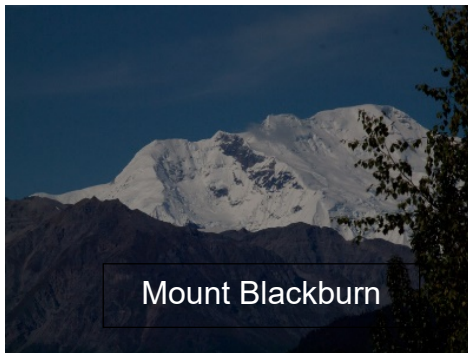


Kennecott River under the foot bridge



Bear end of the day

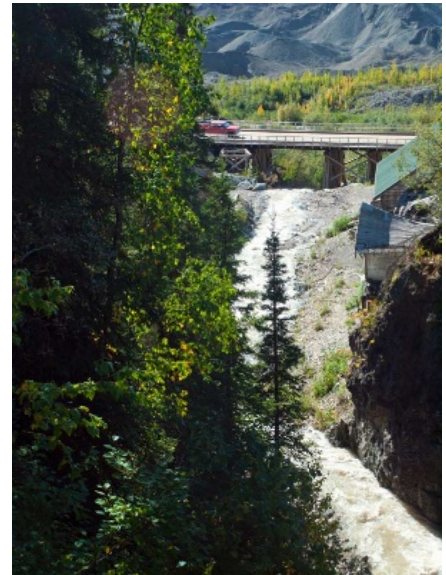




Mount Blackburn



Kennicott Glacier



Time: 9:00 pm

Mileage: 40568

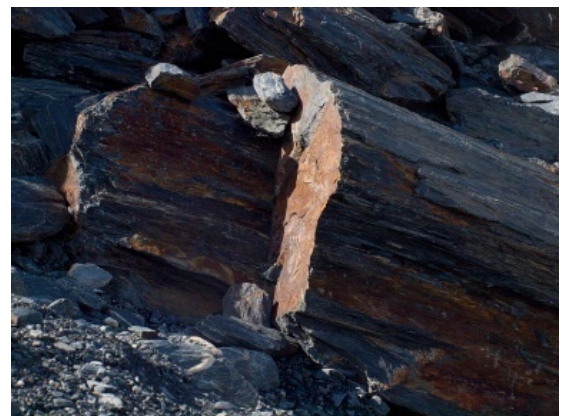
Location: Valdez, Alaska

Now for Valdez

We headed back to Richardson Highway, on the way, we found a Yak Ranch. What is a Yak? It is a cow type animal from the Mongolian Steppe and Tibet. They are perfectly suited to the Alaskan environment. We bought Yak yarn and raw fur for spinning and 2 pounds of ground Yak Meat.



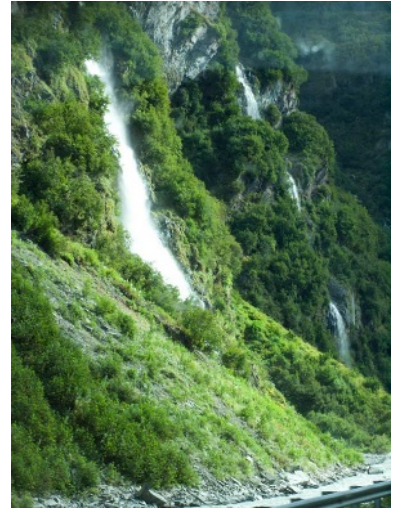
On Richardson Highway, we turned south to Valdez. We stopped for lunch at Worthington Glacier. It is located right next to the highway. I took a couple of large format shot and Jill and Snapson hike up closer to the glacier.



At Thompson Pass, we pulled over to look at one impressive 220 degree view of the peaks and glaciers. And we were not alone.



Below the pass we passed through Keystone Canyon with lots of waterfalls and cliffs. We didn't have time to stop and take a lot of photos, so we plan to come back tomorrow and spend some quality time here. It is a very special place.



Arriving at Valdez, we found a camp site on the edge of town. We went to town and did some grocery shopping and looked for a laundry. The laundry at the campground only has one washer and one dryer. In town, the laundries are located in gas stations. That made it hard to find them, since we would not have thought to look there.

76 Date: 8/28/2016

Time: 7:00 pm

Mileage: 40568

Location: Valdez, Alaska

What to do in Valdez

Went to breakfast in town, but had trouble finding any place open for breakfast. We finally found the a burger shack open for breakfast. The staff was over worked and slow. The restaurant was across the parking lot from the gas station with the laundry, so I started the wash. I came back and breakfast didn't come for another 20 minutes and I only had 10 minutes to wolf down my share.



Crook Creek Falls

After checking the information we had about tours, we talked with two companies. Most of the glacier tours were all day events. The tour to Columbia Glacier did not get to the glacier, only the moraine and the glacier is 11 miles behind

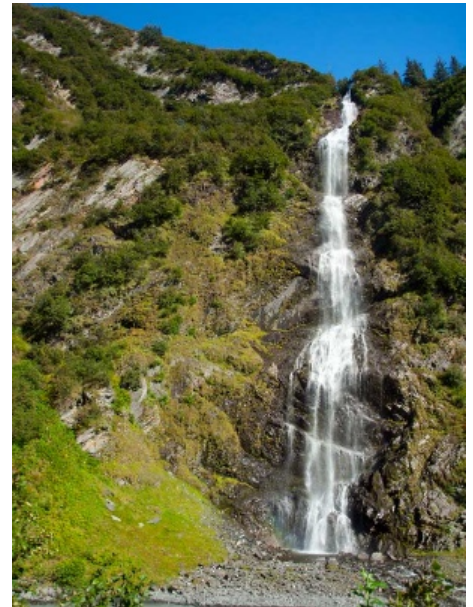
that. The wind was up and construction of the new harbor conflicts with sea kayaking Duck Flats, so local sea was out too. We stopped at the Forest Service Visitor Center. Very nice small center and friendly staff. We got a little book on the trails in the area, there are actually have quite of few in the area. Outback of the VC, we photographed the Crooked Creek Waterfall. We saw lots of salmon trying to go up those falls!



Returning to camp, I posted the last three days of the journal and had lunch. It took quite a while and then we headed to Keystone Canyon. Here there are waterfalls everywhere, coming down both sides of the highway. One of the longest is called, of course, Bridal Veil Falls. We spent lots of time there and I got a bunch of good photos there. We love having that small car to do this kind of travel.



We then went to the end of Airport Road. It leads to the lake below the Valdez Glacier. You can't really see much of the



Glacier. The land is owned by the city and unfortunately developed strangely. It has a

parking lot of sorts, no developed trails, and a quarry on the edge of the lake. While they didn't do much for the Glacier...

Down the road the city has a pretty nice campground with fully developed sites.

After dinner, we walked a couple of trails, one near the harbor and the other on the distant edge of town. Jill walked my legs off again. But we got a few sunset photos, although sunsets in Alaska seem to be rather lack luster, not much color.



Basically, we found the scenery around Valdez to be outstanding, but the town seems to be poorly organized and lacking in visitor services. The industries that seem to drive this town are oil transportation and fishing.

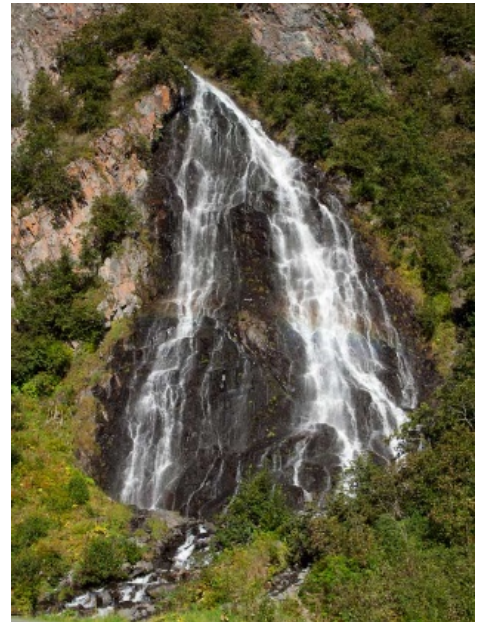
Time: 5:00 pm

Mileage: 40859

Location: Slana, Alaska

A Good Road Going Bad

We got an early start leaving Valdez, but starting up Keystone Canyon, we found Horsetail Falls in morning light. So, we stopped to take pictures. Yesterday we missed the afternoon light on this waterfall.



Continuing up Richardson Highway, stopping for lunch at Willow Lake overlook. Earlier on the road, the fall colors were outstanding. Of course we waited for this Lake overlook...no fall color but an outstanding beautiful day with the Wrangell Mountains shining in the distance. The lake, when the wind isn't blowing, will provide a great reflection. Of course today we had wind, but we took pictures anyway because the peaks were out. I used my large format camera, Jill the digital, lots of pictures.



Wrangell Moutains

About 5 miles before we got to Glennallen to gas up, we saw TWO MOOSE on the side of the road. One ran into the woods and as we slowed, the other moose crossed the road in front of us and headed into the wood on the other side of the road.

Heading up the Richardson Highway, we turned east on the Tok Cutoff. The Milepost book states in RED lettering "From here east to Tok, the highway is a patchwork of new, improved highway and good highway going bad (frost heaves, damaged pavement)." We were stopped for about ten minutes at one spot while the road department placed gravel in one of three places that had been damaged.

These were not the only ones. Actually, the frost heaves weren't that bad, because I was only going about 30 MPH anyway.



Moose Number Two



Siana Post Office

We were driving into a very strong head wind that tended to shove the motorhome left or right at a whim.

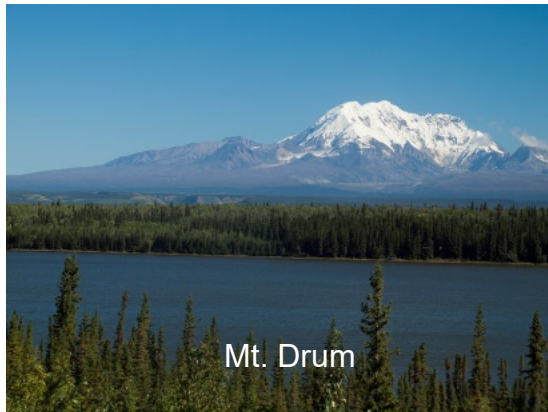
After 59 miles of this I had about all I wanted to take. My hands were cramping on the steering wheel. So we turned off at Slana and got a campsite at Hart D Ranch, a private RV



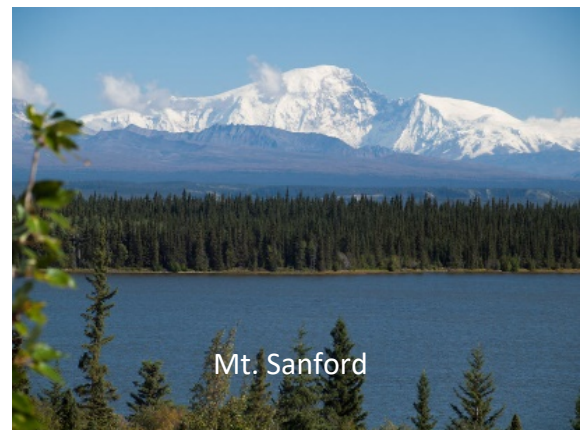
Rare and endangered!

Park. It is a very nice, well maintained place and it is for sale, if anyone is interested in living 60 from both Glennallen and Tok. You may also have to become the Post Master as the Post Office is right in front of the RV Park.

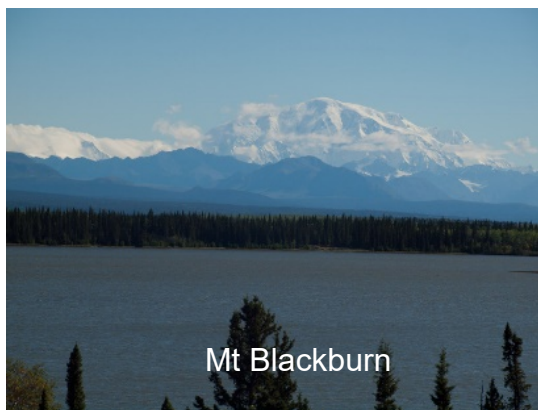
We walked back up the road to the NPS Ranger Station for Wrangell- St. Elias NP to get our NPS Passport book stamped and pick up information about trails in the area. When we got back to the campsite, we took a lap around the campground and Jill made her new goal, 11,700 steps.



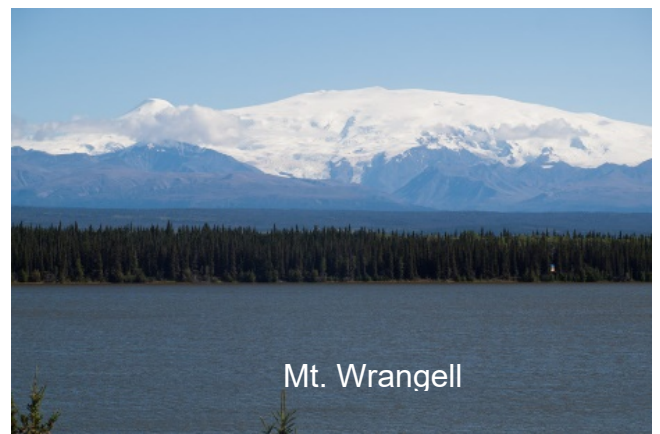
Mt. Drum



Mt. Sanford



Mt Blackburn



Mt. Wrangell

Time: 5:00 pm

Mileage: 41007

Location: Border City, Alaska

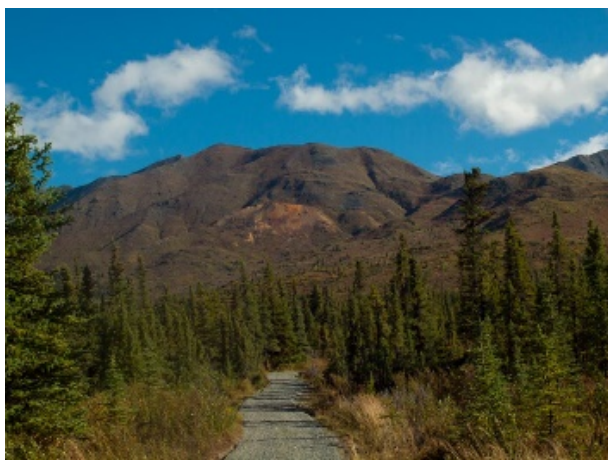
A Chrisp Fall Day or De'javu, Tok again!

So we awoke to another beautiful morning; chrisp and chilly, with a feeling that fall is in the air. Les said if it was sunny today, we could take a walk on one of the National Park's Trails. We forgot to fill the Tracker with gas, so it limited how far we could drive down the Nabesna Road into the park. So we drove 19 miles out to the Caribou Creek trailhead. The ranger in the Visitor Center yesterday described the trail, as 3.5 mile

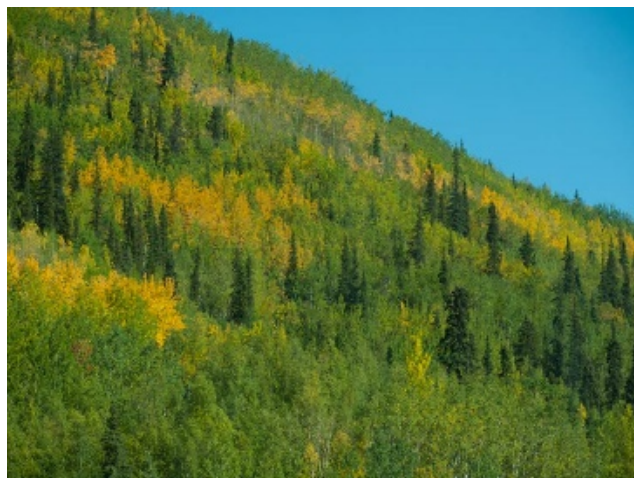


out to a cabin, but we would come to a creek halfway out, which we would "get our feet wet" if we tried to cross it. So, off we went looking for the creek. Mile and half out we crossed a small drizzle of a creek, we could both step over. Les said is this the creek? I said it doesn't look like what she described let's walk futher, another ½ mile and still no creek. So we returned the two miles back. Les looked at the map on the trailhead and said yep that was the creek! Oh well, she must not have walked it recently. It was a nice walk, with lovely views of Sanford Mountain in the distance. We returned to the RV,

and headed to Tok and the Alaskan Highway. The fall colors were magificant in the clear light on the drive to Tok.



Frozen Tater-Tots, not even in Costcos. We gased up, and headed for the border, 88 miles away.



When we got to Tok, we stopped in the local store to restock some food. Because this is one of the only places to stock-up for hundreds of miles, the local folk were stocking up for winter. It had Costco beat. You could buy ex-large cases of cans of Stew, Beans etc. I have never seen such a large bag of

About 25 miles from the border, we stopped at the Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center. A nice log cabin, with a deck overlooking two rivers in the Valley below. Les looked exhausted (I walked his feet off again this morning). I volunteered to drive, but me driving on frost heaves, didn't sound relaxing to him, so we stopped 3 miles away, in a "RV Park." Another parking lot, but because we were the only one here, it is quiet and over looking taiga or "land of little sticks." JMA



A second motorhome pulled in, so we were not alone. When I took the trash to the trash can, the guy from the other motorhome called to me "Hi Neighbor"! As it turned out, we were not only neighbors in the campground, but they are from South Lake Tahoe, left on June 15th (2 days after us), and has been crossing paths with us the whole trip. He said he has seen the Tracker with the Egret tire cover in other places. The Egret is my own unique design. Tomorrow, it is south to Canada. LDA

79 Date: 8/31/2016

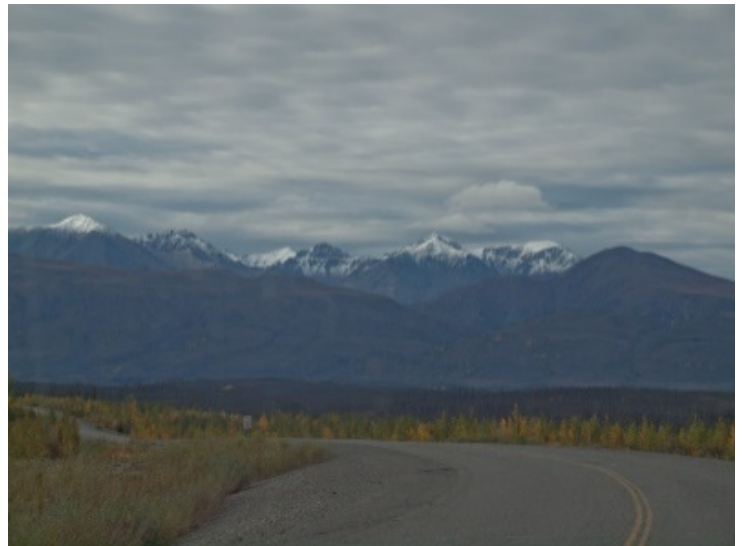
Time: 5:00 pm

Mileage: 41214

Location: Haines Junction,
Yukon

Oh Canada!

We got an early start. Didn't even eat breakfast. The weather was lightly overcast, but dry as we headed for the border. Many of the high peaks show fresh snow.



The Canadian Customs is not on the border with the US Customs building. We found it as we entered Beaver Creek. We were

concerned that Customs was going to give us a problem because our health certificate for Sampson and Cinnamon was expired. We had planned to get a new certificate from a vet in Tok. I had checked the internet before the trip and saw they had two vets in Tok. I guess I didn't look as closely as Jill, because they have two vets serving the Tok area from Fairbanks. Oops! So at the border station we handed over our passports and answered all their questions, planning to be surprised if they had a problem with the expiration of the health certificate. For some reason Sampson stayed on the couch and quiet as a mouse. Cinnamon did her usual, hide in the pillows of the bed. They didn't ask if we had any pets and we didn't volunteer any information.

We ate breakfast at Buckshot Betty's, in Beaver Creek Yukon Territory. Then we went to the visitor center, got our Yukon Tourism books stamped and turned in the registration pages for seeing 20 sites in the Yukon and get a chance to win Two Troy ounces of gold. We were one or two sites shy of the 20, but we picked up three more sites before the end of the day. One of the sites was the Kluana Museum of Natural History in Burwash Landing. The displays and interpretation were top notch, quite a surprise in a small town.



We are lunch at the Canadian National Park visitor center at Slims River at the south end of Kluana Lake. While there we got out the spotting scope and took photos of Dall Sheep on the mountain behind the visitor center. There are 182 sheep in the area and there were 40-50 easy to see from the parking lot. It had started to rain a little.

Whenever we stopped and talked to anyone in Alaska, they complained how bad this patch of road is between Beaver Creek and Haines Junction.

It was slow, it had frost heaves, and long portions of road work, with pilot cars, but with the fall color, all and all, it was a very nice drive. Then only trouble is the rain was getting a little heavier.

When we got to Haines Junction, we went to the Visitor Center/Da Ku Cultural Center. We got another two stamps in our Yukon Tourist book and used the free Wi-Fi to publish yesterday's journal entry. The campgrounds in town that had electricity didn't look all that nice and they didn't have Wi-Fi, so we opted to stay in a Yukon government campground at Pine Lake. The Yukon government campgrounds are \$12 a night, for a level site, picnic table & fire pit, cook shelter with wood stove, and free fire wood. It is a good deal and we only plan to stay one night, so electricity and the other amenities we usually have at an RV park aren't really necessary.



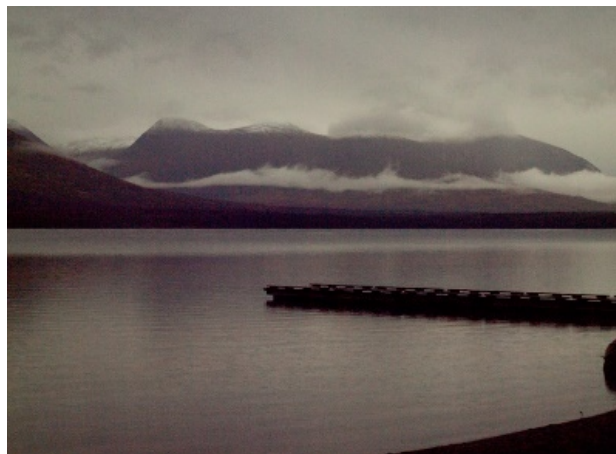
Time: 6:00 pm

Mileage: 41305

Location: Whitehorse, Yukon

Into Hot Water Again!

Starting the days was a walk on the nature trail by Pine Lake. We were not able to do the whole trail as some in their infinity wisdom had decided to raise the lake level to improve boating. The downside was that the edge of the lake has suffered a massive die off of the trees and the shore itself is crumbling into the lake. The trail we tried to walk is now under water in many places.



We headed further east this morning with a light rain and heavy overcast skies. We had one lengthy stall for road work and then the rest of the road was in reasonable good shape, only a few frost heaves. Our only stop was at the historic Canyon Creek Bridge. After taking several digital photos from various angles, we continued east again.

Just before Whitehorse, we turned up Highway 2 again, but about 3 miles up the road, we turned west toward Takhini Hot Springs. We got a campsite in their

campground. We needed some groceries, so we took the Tracker to Whitehorse and ate a late lunch and did the shopping. When we got back to camp, I laid down to read and Jill took Sampson for a walk.

After dinner, we had a nice soak in the hot pools. The pool is divided into a hot side and a warm side with a couple of swinging doors that you could get through with out mixing the temperature too much. After the soak, we had a fancy crape dessert at the restaurant at the hot springs. Other than this evening, today was a fairly uneventful day of travel.



Time: 6:00 pm

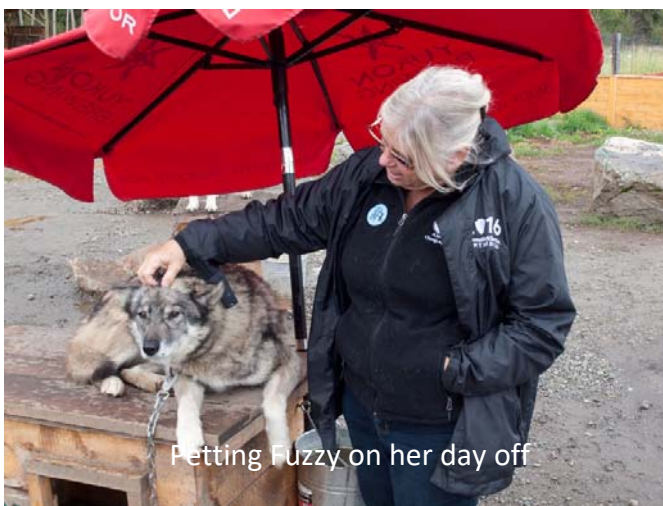
Mileage: 41444

Location: Dyea, Alaska

Back into Alaska

Leaving the campground at Takhini Hot Springs, Jill went to Whitehorse to shop and get Canadian money from a bank. I, on the other hand, had to dump the tanks and top off the fresh water, get gas in the motorhome and propane. All of these jobs were just a little more complicated than they should have been. We met up again at the museum by the airport, hooked up the Tracker to the motorhome and headed for Skagway.

We made a stop at Caribou Crossing, a tourist trap just outside of Carcross. We almost went by, but I read a sign that said they had Husky Puppies, so Jill said turn in NOW! So we bought a Carcross pin, wandered through the natural history displays, took a dog sled ride and had dessert. Of course there was no snow to ride on, so they pulled a 7 passenger wheeled cart. The dogs sure seemed to be having fun. We made a pit stop part way so they could get a drink and splask in their dog pools. We also petted the puppies.



Petting Fuzzy on her day off



We continued on to Carcross, the actual town and found it had grown quite a bit since 1995. So we wandered there for about an hour. We finished lunch with a Dog Sled (it is a hot dog in a bread dough covering). The buses from Skagway (and the

cruise ships) fill the town for a short time, and then they were gone.



The drive to Skagway even on a cloudy day is magnificent. Lots of large lakes, then as we neared White Pass, granite with little tarns. Of course now we are in British Columbia, then finally Alaska. When we entered the "US," the border agent, asked if we had purchase and fruit or vegetables, in Canada. Jill had to tell him, that we bought carrots, cabbage salad, oh yeah, Jill said, we have an avocado. He wanted to see it, so she as handed him the open Avocado, Jill remembered we bought it in Alaska. He was quite upset that we couldn't remember what we purchase and where. We didn't



know there was going to be a quiz. Also he didn't even ask about the dog. So after the border agent made sure the US was secure from vegetables (what is this California?) we drove into Skagway. It was probably a good thing we didn't say anything about the Yak meat we bought in Alaska.



There are two RV parks in Skagway. RV parking lots we expected, the RV park-lot being full we didn't think would be trouble. As we drove by we saw one of those RV Tours had taken up most of the RV parks. There were also three cruise ships docked. Busy place. So we parked on a side street, unhitched, and drove the Tracker to the NPS campground 9 miles out in Dyea to see if

- a) the road was as bad as Milepost said (limited to RV's < 25') and
- b) if there was camping space.

Road is narrow but no problem, and plenty of campsites, in fact it is after the season and campsites are FREE! So here we are in a quiet forest site.

After dinner, Jill wanted to take Sampson for a walk, but it was getting dark, so she asked me to go along. Yes, it is getting dark in the evenings now, especially with the cloud cover, which seems to be breaking up. So we walked out of the campground and further up the road to the old bridge over the Tayla River. It has a superstructure that restricts vehicle height to 11' 4". So Tatanka can't go across as he is 12' 4" tall.

The map there shows the ruins of the town of Dyea to be on the other side of the bridge and the trail head of the Chilkoot Trail is on this side. This location was one of the famous access point for the Klondike gold rush. We have to walk a portion of the trail, because we already bought the pin.

82 Date: 9/3/2016

Time: 6:45 pm

Mileage: 41444

Location: Dyea, Alaska

Skagway

We slept in a little this morning, so we ate light. We headed into Skagway and straight to the Ferry Terminal. We spent a long time talking with a young man trying to get us lined up on ferry passage to Prince Rupert with a few stops along the way. Unfortunately, the ferry service seems a bit irregular to different places. Initially Jill wanted to go to Juneau, Petersburg, Wrangell, and finally to Prince Rupert. Then she remembered she had never been to Sitka and she had left out Ketchikan. The young agent was having trouble getting up with the car and motorhome on the ferry because there was already a lot planned. So another agent helped him get us on and there was space available. He also pointed out that if we went to Sitka after Juneau, we would have to return to Juneau and spend a week at Sitka. So we completely changed it all around so that we are now going from Skagway on Monday to Sitka, then to Ketchikan and finally to Prince Rupert. It all got rather confusing so now we are skipping several locations, including Juneau. We can make changes down the line, but there may be a fee to change the plans.



It was cloudy all day again today, but no rain. Yesterday, there were three cruise ships in port and the town was a mad-house with people wandering all over the place. Today there was only one cruise ship and we walked into a restaurant that was all but empty to have lunch. We went on over to the public library to post the last three days of the journal. Then got a snack of Alaskan Fry Bread. It was not good for us but sure tasted great.

We returned to Dyea and went on up the road to find how people were getting to the other side of the river to camp. We can see the campers, trailers and small motorhomes among the trees as we drive to our campground. Once over the bridge, there is a road with a sign to Historic Dyea and the cemetery, so we continued up the main road. There were no more signs after that and none of the many roads out there seemed to go the right direction. We found an old man walking his dog and asked for directions. After a long rambling description from him we were even more lost. So we headed back to the road to Historic Dyea and took it. NPS has been improving it and we found that the road went past the townsite and onto the camp area.



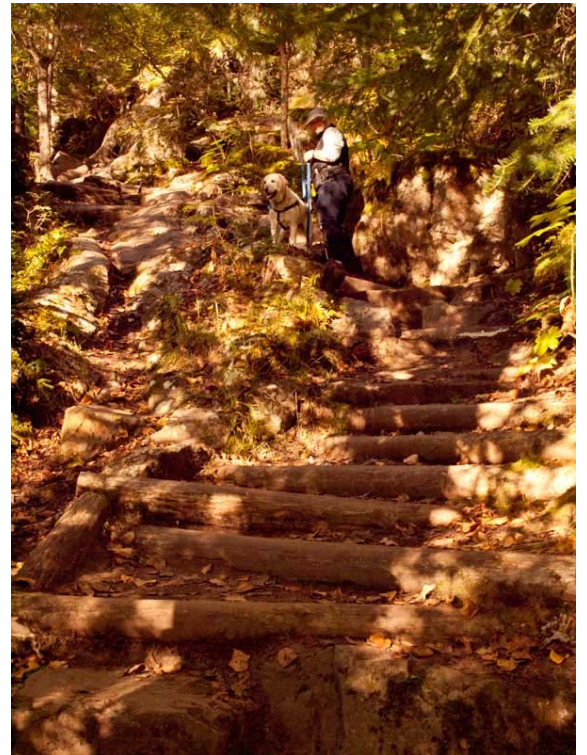
After driving through the camp area, we stopped at the town site and walked the trails to look over the town. The site was originally a fishing village of Tlinkit Indians. But the earliest of the gold seeking Klondikers came in and built a town of 20,000 on top of them. Oh, they did hire the Indians to carry their 2000 pounds of gear per person up to the Canadian border, by way of the Chilkoot Trail. There was

n other trail out of Skagway up to White Pass that many tried to use horses to pack the supplies up, but so many horses died on the trail, it became known as Dead Horse Pass. The railway was soon completed up this route and the town of Dyea simply died. Some of the buildings continued to be used for a while, but without maintenance they fell down. Many buildings were simply hauled away to Skagway and elsewhere. Today there is a foundation evident for a warehouse and a building front for the real estate office. Other than that, there is only moss and trees today. The Tlinkit life style was completely altered and they are still trying to reclaim their traditions. This seems to be a very common occurrence throughout western Canada and



Alaska. The native people in this region tended to be peaceful and willing to trade with the new comers, but their life style suffered for it.

Next we crossed the bridge and started walking the Chilkoot Trail. This portion seem unlikely to have actually been used by the miners as it is very steep and there are other more level ways available, including the river when it would freeze in the winter. So we walked about half a mile and turned around when the sun set behind the mountain to the west.



I drove back to came, while Jill and Sampson walked back. She is trying to make goal on her Garmin watch, but it keeps increasing the goal. So, now it is after dinner and she just took Sampson out to walk around the campground to get the remaining 900 steps.

83 Date: 9/4/2016

Time: 6:45 pm

Mileage: 41444

Location: Dyea, Alaska

Termination Dust

Termination Dust, that's what the miner's called the light early snow. This snow is what most miner's who were going "outside," listen to, and then started planning their trip down



to the lower 48. It was time to Terminate their gold panning activity for the season. Les and I have seen that snow on the mountains around here, so we are getting a little antsy to head south. But then a day like today happens. Beautiful, blue sky and wonderful sun. I drove Les, crazy asking should we really be leaving tomorrow?



Our day started early, as we caught, the people only (plus our dog Sam), "Fast Ferry" over to Haines, AK. A forty-five minute boat ride, or 340 mile drive... you guess what we did. There we walked all over Fort Seward, which is just outside of Haines, Les was having so much fun with his large format camera. Sam and I were having fun walking around the area and we went towards downtown Haines, leaving Les to his camera. Les also walked out to a nearby point, to take pictures back at the town.



I noticed a lot of the shops and even the Museums were closed. It's Sunday, and the summer crew (college kids) are gone, so according to the women in the town information center, "only thing open are the Churches." It didn't bother us, as we wandered in the sunshine. Haines is a





quiet town, it gets one cruise ship a week, Skagway up to 17! If I were to do this again, I would drive to Haines, and enjoy the peace, and visit Skagway via the ferry. Well after we had lunch on a patio, in the sun, we caught the 1:00 clock ferry back. After a quick visit and some tea at a little place by a Garden we returned to simply hang out at the RV in the sun. Termination dust in the mountains and summer places closing, it is time to head south via the Alaska Marine Ferry...

