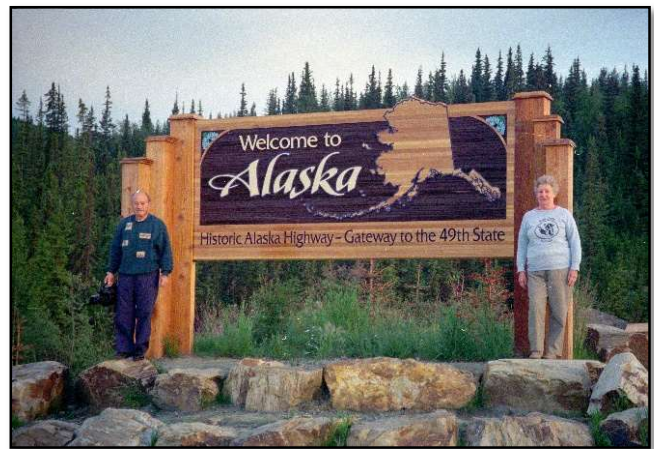


North to Alaska

Introduction

Welcome to your Alaska adventure. Well, not adventure exactly, since this trip has been planned in great detail to *avoid* things that might be called adventurous, so suffice it to say that you are going someplace you have never been before. And that is important because you are part of the FOURTH generation to make this trip. In 1989, we took our children, people you know as Mom and Uncle Josh. Ten years later we took my parents, George



and Anne Ewing (known to a few as Toots and

Shorty), and now you.

I hope to narrate this trip and show you some of the many pictures I have taken over the years (we have since been to Alaska 4 more times). Above all, though, I want you to keep one principle in mind throughout this trip: IF YOU AREN'T HAVING FUN, YOU'RE DOING IT WRONG!

It's important to recognize that the planning was done with the usual guideline of "see it while you are here." And realize we are not camping, we are going places and seeing things, so campgrounds are for sleeping between days. That means, unfortunately, we have to keep to the schedule or we don't get to see it all. Also unfortunately, it took us six trips to see it all, and then we missed some things. It not only will be impossible to see it all in the slightly-less-than four weeks we have allotted, but some of the things we saw in the past are simply no longer available to us. I will try to show some pictures of those things just as a part of my favorite thing, which is storytelling. One other thing: you should know that this is a LONG trip and you will necessarily be spending several hours of each day in your vehicle. Enjoy the scenery (lots of it), look for wildlife (lots of it), read, especially this travelogue, entertain yourself or take a nap if you can. Above all, remember: IF YOU AREN'T HAVING FUN, YOU'RE DOING IT WRONG!

A couple of other things. There are many places along this route where we could easily stop and sightsee for an additional hour or two, or even three or four days, but we simply do not have the

time. Just as we must skip some of the wonderful but lengthy side trips that we made (separate trips of two or three weeks each), you will be seeing only the highlights of Alaska. You will have to go back later if you want to see the rest. And finally, having fun is hard work. You can rest when you get home.

Vacation

consists of:

2 *weeks, which are*

2 *Short, after which you are*

2 *Tired*

2 *Work and*

2 *Broke not*

2 *<*

Notice that this is a pre-trip description. It anticipates what you will see and the detailed plan even says when you must arrive (most of these activities are reserved already) and how much time you can spend there. And over forty years of traveling I have found that no matter how detailed and diligently I plan, you still have to take the trip, because “things” will happen, both positive and negative, that will affect the plan and also make it impossible to take the same trip again. I found a lot of that in planning this trip, that many of the highlights of our past trips are simply no longer practical, and perhaps are now gone. I will mention those, much as I will those sidetrips, and the stories that go with them. I guess I’m a little sentimental that way. The rest of this is broken down day by day, on the presumption that *no matter what happens on a given day, we get back on the schedule for the following day.*

DAY ONE, June 11: Big things

The first day of any trip is always about making a lot of miles, to get past those things close by that you can see on a weekend, or that you have seen before the last time you went through, or that you are waiting to see until you are too old to make the longer trips. We're not there yet!

Minnesota is pretty spread out, lots and lots of little towns that nobody wants to visit, so every little town seems to want to put up some kind of an attraction to draw in tourists. We will be bypassing three of those, which we have seen and stopping at the fourth, which we have not.



The first is Big Ole'. Big Ole' is one of Minnesota's most iconic roadside giants — a **28-foot fiberglass Viking** who has become the unofficial greeter of Alexandria. He's oversized, a little audacious, and absolutely central to the town's identity.

- Positioned at **Big Ole Central Park**, right across from the **Runestone Museum**
- Holding a shield that boldly proclaims "**Alexandria: Birthplace of America**" — a nod to the controversial Kensington Runestone

Big Ole' was originally built for the **1965 New York World's Fair**, where Alexandria promoted its Runestone-based claim of early Norse exploration. Sculptor **Gordon Schumaker** designed him as a towering ambassador of local Scandinavian pride. After the fair closed, he was shipped back to Minnesota and installed downtown in December 1965 — immediately becoming a beloved (and sometimes mischievously targeted) landmark.



Otto the Otter is Fergus Falls' proud, slightly whimsical claim to fame — a **40-foot-long, 15-foot-tall concrete otter** who has been watching over Grotto Lake since 1972. He's one of Minnesota's classic "world's largest" roadside giants, and he embodies the town's identity as the heart of **Otter Tail County**.

- Constructed by **Fergus Falls High School students**, guided by shop teacher **Tom Willett**
- Recognized as the **world's largest otter sculpture**



Pelican Pete is the longtime mascot of **Pelican Rapids**, right next to Pelican Lake in Otter Tail County. He's one of Minnesota's classic roadside giants — not quite as tall as Big Ole', but absolutely part of the same quirky Upper Midwest tradition.

Pelican Pete is a **16-foot-tall concrete pelican statue**, originally built in **1957**. He's widely recognized as the **world's largest pelican**, and he has stood for decades at the Mill Pond dam on the Pelican River. He's painted bright white with an oversized orange bill, perched on a rock outcrop with water flowing nearby — which gives him a surprisingly dynamic presence compared to many static roadside sculptures.



We WILL stop for the **Rothsay Prairie Chicken**. It is one of west-central Minnesota's most charismatic roadside giants — a **13-foot-tall, 18-foot-long, 9,000-pound concrete-and-steel "booming" prairie chicken**, posed mid-display with its bright orange air sacs inflated. It's both wonderfully odd and deeply tied to the region's natural history.



Ahem....

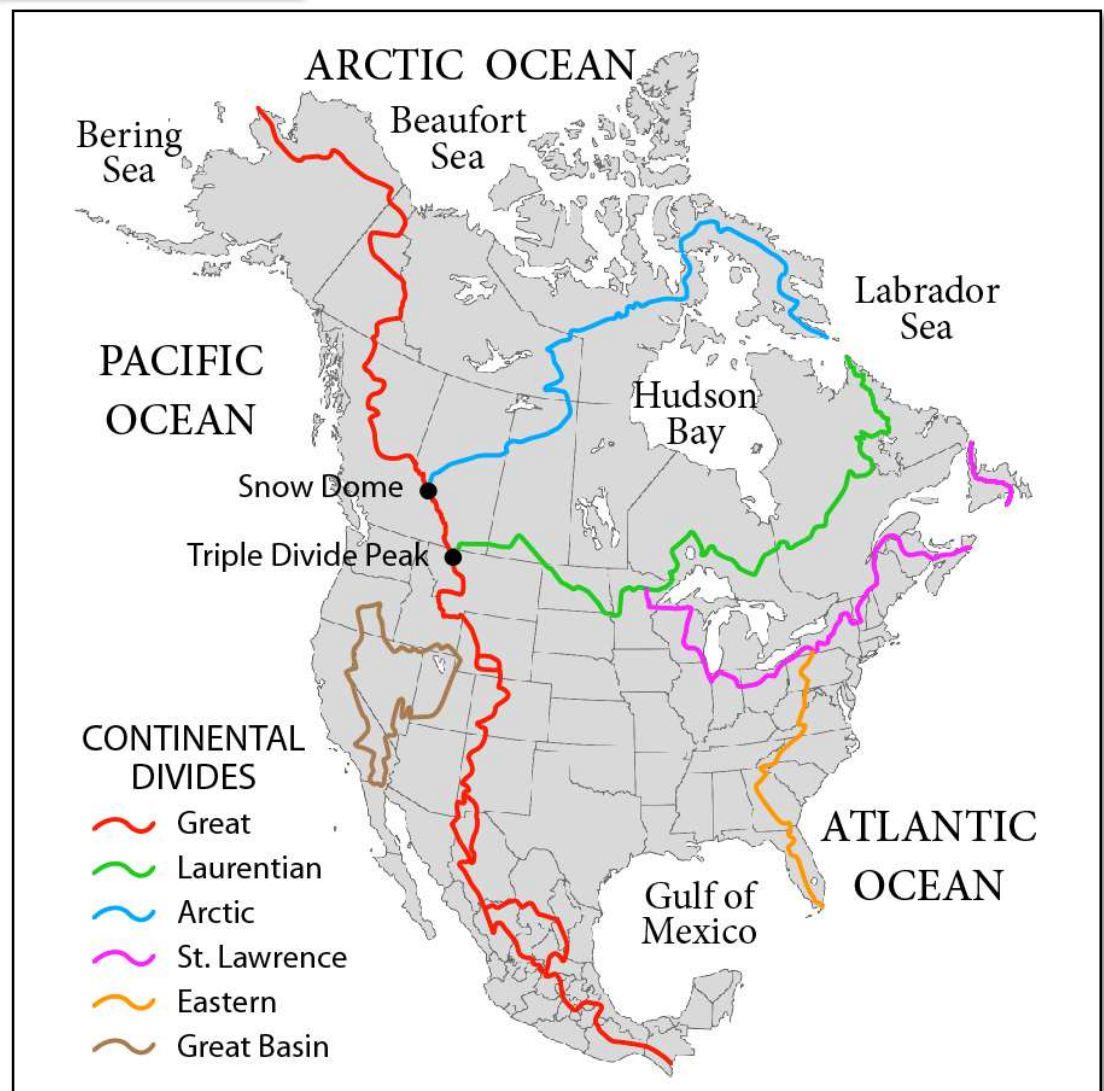
Song today: Paul Bunyan song by Disney.

Just before the Prairie Chicken, we will stop for gas and lunch at the Big Chief Café near Fergus Falls (home of Otto the Otter). Where we also see the Continental Divide marker. This is not the Continental Divide you are thinking about, either, the one which separates waters flowing east from the waters flowing west. Minnesota is crossed by:

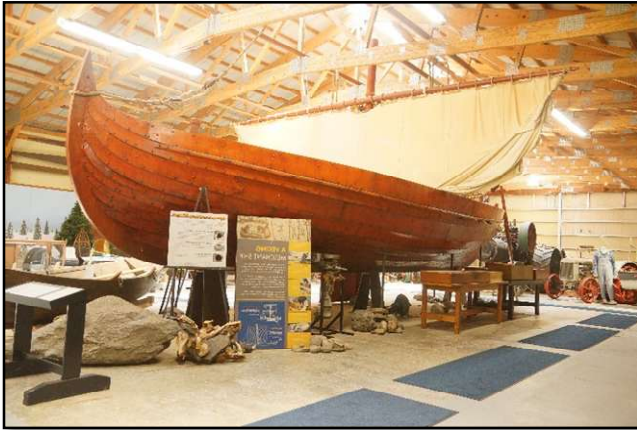
The Laurentian Divide (Northern Divide)

- Runs from **Glacier National Park** across northern Minnesota toward the **Labrador Sea**.
- Separates waters flowing **north to Hudson Bay** from those flowing **south to the Gulf of Mexico**.
- It's the longest divide in Minnesota.

There are several divides in North America, and we will be crossing this AND the Great Divide, or Western Divide, more than once. Also the Arctic Divide. Notice the two TRIPLE divides! Here is a map:



We will bypass the sights of Fargo (Viking Museum and Bonanza Village) and (until our return)



Jamestown (**world's largest Buffalo**). We hope to have a fun meal at the Rockin' 50s Café in Bismarck, and overnight at the KOA. Happy Birthday, Lauren and Janelle!

So why the Rockin' 50s Café? Because I REMEMBER the 50s. Rock 'n' roll came along, doo-wop and beautiful rock ballads with words you could understand were popular. Elvis Presley got his start. But in 1959, Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and "the Big Bopper" (Chantilly Lace was his big hit) all died in a plane crash near Spirit Lake, Iowa. That would become known to us old folks as "the day the music died," popularized in a song (8 minutes 42 seconds long) by Tom McLean in the early 70s called "American Pie." To fans of the Beatles and later groups, I would often say "Music hasn't been the same since Buddy Holly died." It was good for a frown or two. :-)

Oh, and what about the 60s? The same old folks, who were college age during those times, would look back and say "if you remember the 60s, you weren't there." They were referring of course, to the hippie movement and the rampant use of illegal drugs at the time – a small minority, of course, but with a great impact on the culture. There was Woodstock, and Cheech and Chong. We even elected a hippie as the president of the Iowa State University student body one year. [*]

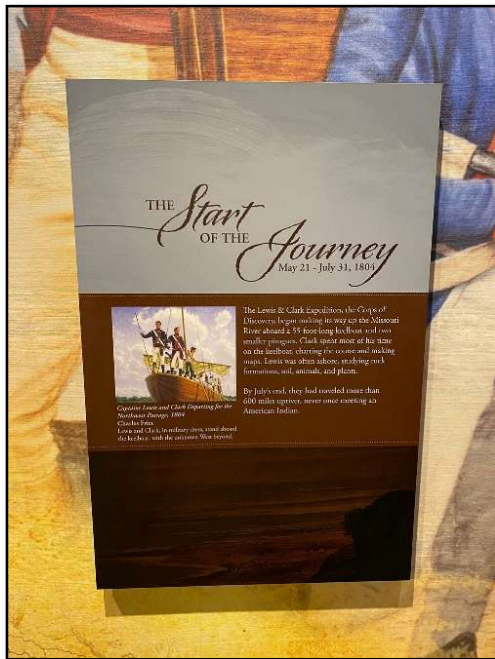
Song today "Old Hippie" by the Bellamy Brothers

Note: Wherever you see [*] you can ask for a story about that.

DAY TWO, June 12: The Corps of Discovery

We have a bit of flexibility today, unlike other days. We need to leave camp somewhere between 8:15 AM and 8:45 AM. That means all awake, slides in, overhead bed up, unplugged, morning ablutions complete, breakfast, AND engine started. It will be the same every morning though the time may differ, generally 8 AM. If that means reveille at 7 AM then y'all work that out amongst yourselves. **Song today: "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" by the Andrews Sisters**

Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center



Again, we are out to make a lot of miles today because it is, after all, over 3000 miles just to get to the Alaska border. We do have one scheduled stop today, and that is the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. This is a marvelous Museum with displays describing all the high points of their complete journey, many of which we have seen on our various trips, and at least one more that we will see later on in this trip. In my hometown of Sioux City, Iowa there is a large monument to Sgt. Floyd, the only member of the Corps of Discovery to die during the three-year expedition. Do you know why he died? [*]

If there is time, we will take the guided tour of Fort Mandan, where Lewis and Clarke spent their first winter with the Mandan and Hidatsa people, and met the only woman to ever appear on US coins, Sakakawea, their indispensable Indian guide. It is surprisingly (perhaps not) like Fort Clatsop on the Oregon coast of the Pacific, where they spent their *third* winter. Shortly after that, we will cross over Lake Sakakawea. It will be interesting to see how much water is in it.



Lake Sakakawea is a massive reservoir in north-central North Dakota, created by the construction of Garrison Dam on the Missouri River on the Missouri River in 1956. It stretches approximately 178 miles with an average width of 2 miles and a maximum width of 14 miles at Van Hook Arm. The lake covers around 307,000 acres and has a maximum depth of 180 feet at the dam, making it the largest manmade lake entirely within North Dakota, the second largest in the U.S. by area, and the third largest by volume. It is named after Sacagawea, the Shoshone-Hidatsa woman who guided the Lewis and Clark Expedition. [*]

Not much else to see until much later. We will have lunch somewhere around the town of Minot, then cross the Canadian border, which should be an interesting experiment, and then just enjoy what I expect to be very little scenery until we get into Moose Jaw for the night. Everything is right there close.

For at least a few of you, this will be your first trip out of the country, across an international border. As I said, this should be interesting. It consists of two parts, immigration and customs. That is what in the US is known as the “ICE department” – Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Going into Canada the first part – immigration – is pretty simple so long as everybody has a passport and nonfamily members under twenty-one have permission documents. It is the second part that gets really tricky. There is a list of things which you are not allowed to bring into Canada, a longer list of things that you are allowed to bring in in limited quantities for your “personal use,” and most of these are food and agricultural products, to avoid bringing crop diseases into the country. I still remember having to sit at the border crossing and eat a whole bag of oranges because they are prohibited.

It makes sense, but motorhomes in particular can get delayed for hours while you sit and wait for the agents go through your refrigerator and all of your cupboards and all your outside compartments looking for things that you did not “declare,” that is, TELL them that you had. I will be sending a list of all those things-- prohibited outright and restricted in quantity – and I STRONGLY recommend that you prepare a “declarations list” that you can simply hand to them, with the most critical items on the top. Our first trip across the border, from North Dakota into Saskatchewan, will probably be the most difficult of the THREE other crossings into Canada this trip.

And of course, that means we will be “entering the United States FOUR times. The most difficult of these, by reputation, is the one at Sweetgrass, Montana. I will be sending a list of the items that must be declared on the way into the US. I am not certain that will be different, but we will see.

Two other things you should notice about this strange country called Canada. The first is that they use the metric system. That means distances in kilometers, measurements in meters (like height of mountains), temperatures in Celsius, and liquids in liters. They also use the Canadian dollar, which isn’t the same as ours. All this is bound to create a lot of confusion unless you learn a little simple mental math to put things in terms you are more likely to relate to. For example, you might get excited the first time you see a speed limit sign that says “Speed limit 100.” That is KILOMETERS per hour, not miles. The quick way to approximate miles per hour is to take two thirds of that (66) but the more accurate way is to take 5/8 (62). The same rule applies for distances to the next town.

- There are 3.75 Liters in a gallon, or roughly 4. If you put in 100 liters of gas at the station, that’s about 25 gallons. Divide by 4.
- Given a mountain’s height in meters, multiply by three and add 10%. 3000 m equal 9900 feet.
- Temperatures should matter to you, but if we are using our own thermometers we are okay; they are Fahrenheit. But if you see a number you are sure is much lower, like 20°, that’s Celsius. Multiply by two, subtract 10%, and add thirty-two. 20°C equals 68°F.

- Weights are in grams or kilograms. 454 grams is a pound, so 28 grams is an ounce. Kilograms times two +10% gives pounds. 5kg = 11 lb.
- Don't forget to change your clocks when we cross a time zone.

I said there were two strange things about this country. The second is that they are officially bilingual, and everything you see or read is supposed to be in English AND French. Now that's certainly not universal. In the province of Québec you will be hard-pressed to find English, [*] and in the province of British Columbia, where we will be part of the time, you will see almost no French at all. Where we are going you will see some French, but never without English. It's a good chance to pick up a little of the French language.

When we took our 50th Anniversary tour of Paris, with a cruise down the Seine, my wife found it humorous that I would be working hard to read the many interpretive signs in museums, churches, etc. in French (I took one year of French in college, and before that "taught" French pronunciation to a pretty classmate acting in a school play). But the Janet would point out that the English was right below the French and much easier!

Mac the Moose

Mac was "born" in 1984, to bring tourists into Moose Jaw! He was constructed by Saskatoon artist Don Foulds using a steel frame, covered with metal mesh and completed with 4 coats of cement. A contest was held to name the moose and the winner was Mac, after late city alderman and moose booster, Les Mackenzie. Mac remains one of the most photographed roadside



attractions in Canada. In 2019 comedians Justin and Greg discovered that Mac no longer had the title of World's Largest Moose. Stor-Elvdal, Norway had built a moose that was just over 32 feet tall. After receiving media attention from all around the world, we decided that we could not let Norway win this competition for the World's Largest Moose. We removed Mac's old antlers and left them on the ground beneath him, to give the impression that he shed his old antlers! "Team Mac" built him a new set of antlers and on October 10, 2019, Mac became (and will hopefully stay) the Tallest Moose in the World once again! Right behind is the "Snowbird," in the colours of the RCSF Snowbirds Air Demonstration Squadron. Across the street is our KOA campground for the night and its restaurant.

DAY THREE, June 13: Into the West

The Western Development Museum (WDM) in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan is one of series of museums that are found in different locations in the province. The Saskatchewan Western Development Museum (WDM) is the museum of social and economic history for the Province of Saskatchewan. From its origins in the late 1940s, the complex of four public museums had a vision of becoming the “Smithsonian Museum of the Prairies.” Today’s network of four exhibit branches are located in the cities of Moose Jaw, North Battleford, Saskatoon and Yorkton, with a headquarters facility, the Curatorial Centre, also in Saskatoon. Each of the four main museums depicts a major theme that impacted the history of Saskatchewan: Yorkton – Story of People, Saskatoon – 1910 Boomtown, North Battleford – Heritage Farm & Village and Moose Jaw – History of Transportation.

Saskatchewan has a rich heritage in transportation that dates back to prehistoric times. Until the early nineteenth century, the chief means of transporting people and goods across the west was along natural waterways by canoe, or over land by Red River cart, horseback, pack horse or travois. By the time of the first European settlement, the railway played a crucial role in opening Western Canada, delivering goods and passengers along a ribbon of steel. Later generations experienced the impact of the automobile and the network of roads carved from the land. The Museum follows the 20th Century and the daring attempts to master the sky, using early aircraft, often little more than canvas and wood held together with wire and prairie ingenuity.



Phase one of the new commemorative centenary exhibits, *Winning the Prairie Gamble: The Saskatchewan Story*, are now open. Composed of the introductory section of the exhibits which sets the stage for provincehood. The events are recounted in an evocative blend of song and story, photographs and maps – available to Museum visitors with the push of a button. When you hop on board the WDM Shortline narrow gauge railway to tour the track outside the Museum, you will be able

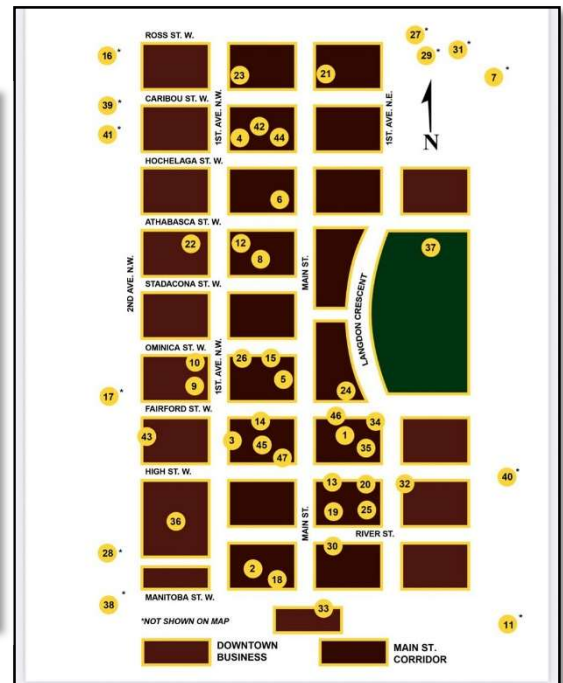
to travel back to an earlier era of steam trains. Volunteers operate the train on **weekends** and holidays May 24th to Labour Day (weather permitting). The History of Transportation has a lot to



offer including: • Picnic site on Museum Grounds • Self-guided tour information • Unique collection of vehicles • Shortline Railway • Museum Gift Shop Lots more to see and if you like automobiles, look for a Bricklin (made in Canada) sportscar, one of very few still out there. For aviation enthusiasts, the Moose Jaw WDM is a must. A bevy of significant aircraft are located in Moose Jaw including the stalwart Noorduyt Norseman, the Canadian bush

plane that had served to open up the north, a gallery devoted to the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan that dotted the prairies with training sites and the Snowbirds Gallery. The unique gallery is the only one in the world to feature Canada's premier aerobatic team, the **431 Squadron Snowbirds**. Through interactive demonstrations and static aircraft displays, you will experience the personal side of the team, learn of Canadian military aerobatic flight history and view behind-the-scenes areas frequented by pilots and crew. Youngsters have a chance to sit in an ejection seat and experience the thrill of being a military aerobatic pilot.

If there is time, I would like to go see at least a few of the famous Murals of Moose Jaw. []*



After that, Western Saskatchewan gets kind of boring except for the vast fields of canola and the hay fields running down the middle of the highway. I don't know what it will look like this time of the year but here is Grandpa Shorty, a man outstanding in his field. By the way, you might want to look up what this crop was called before Marketing renamed it.



But the trick is not to be bored. Try to find something to look at and imagine the story that might go with it. Something like the following:

Song today "Four Strong Winds" by the Kingston Trio

So we are traveling out across the High Plains of western Wyoming, or it may have been Montana, or Manitoba since they all look much the same. We are driving into the sunset and it is reasonably beautiful though not spectacular, unless you are like me, colorblind and you can make up your own colors 😊. I often see pink where others see light Gray, and red where others see only dark gray. I'm almost sorry you can't see it. I can see it correctly if I concentrate long enough, but as I usually say, "it's prettier my way." Ask Janet, she will tell you. Naturally the question was raised as to why sunsets are so much more colorful than sunrises, since the geometric relationship of the sun and earth is the same. The simple scientific answer is that the heat of the day and the wind kick up dust, and that is what colors the sunset. The other and perhaps better answer was offered by my lovely traveling companion of 50+ years, who simply said, "or maybe it's because God wants it that way." Prettier *her* way, in that case.

Speaking of monotony, my Dad had a few things to say about that. One of them came from a set of Burma-Shave signs he had seen, since he sort of collected them in his excellent memory. The Burma-Shave company made shaving cream, and for quite a while they would post clever little ditties alongside the road, always five signs to hold the simple quatrain plus "Burma-Shave." Here is a sample:

Around the curve
lickety-split
beautiful car
wasn't it?
Burma-Shave

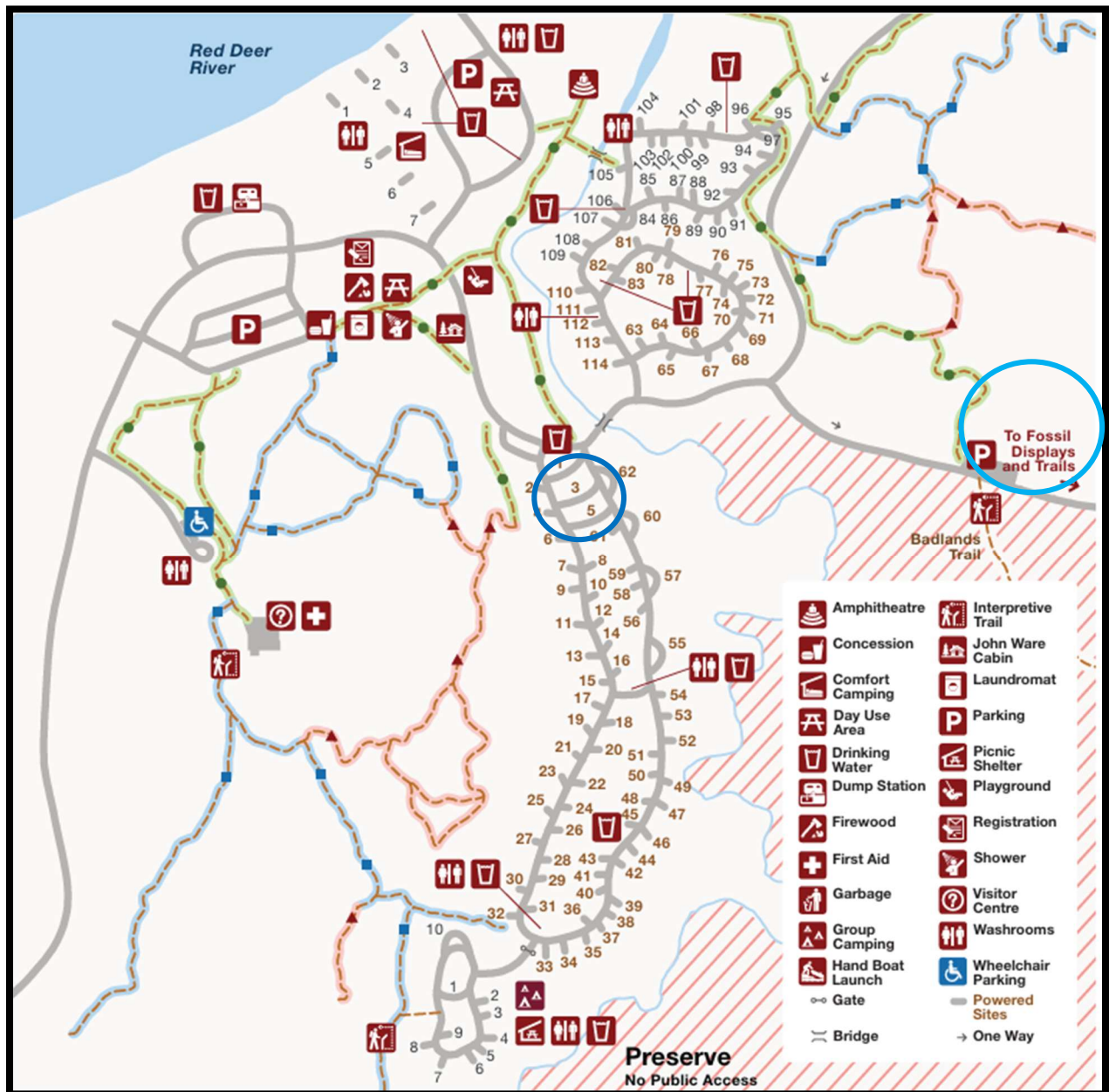
Anyway, in this case I was reminded of those signs partway across the 900 miles east to west across Texas. It said:

The Sun May rise
the Sun May set
but you will be
in Texas yet
Burma-Shave

and even *that* is not the point of my story. We are driving across Nevada. And suddenly there is a large red-and-white billboard out in the desert beside the road. It says, "This is Sagebrush, take all you want." About 50 miles later, there is an almost identical sign and it says, "More Sagebrush, take all you want." And then, about 50 miles after that there is a third sign, same large size and color, and it says, "Monotonous, ain't it?"

Then, since we must have a place to camp for the night, and since there are not many campgrounds around, we will try this:

Find our campsites (marked) Then drive the Public Loop Road and stop at the



two fossil displays (marked next page). YMMV.



Dinosaur Provincial Park

Trails

1 UNESCO Overlook/Prairie Loop
One way: 0.5 km

2 Birds and Other Dinosaurs
Loop: 2.5 km

3 Welcome Walk Loop: 1.2 km
Formerly Coulee View

4 Nighthawk Walk One way: 0.6 km

5 Valley View One way: 0.3 km

6 Palaeo Preserve Trail Loop: 1.55 km
Formerly Badlands Trail

7 Time Travellers' Trek One way: 1.7 km

8 Fossil Display Connector
One way: 0.2 km

9 Dino Discovery Trail One way: 0.5 km
Formerly Trail of the Fossil Hunters

10 Prickly Pear Path One way: 1.2 km

11 Extinction Expedition
One way: 1.0 km

12 Stories in Stone One way: 2.2 km

13 Wild Things Challenge
One way: 0.7 km

14 Cottonwood Flats One way: 1.5 km

Hiking Safely

Stick to trails that fit your skill level.

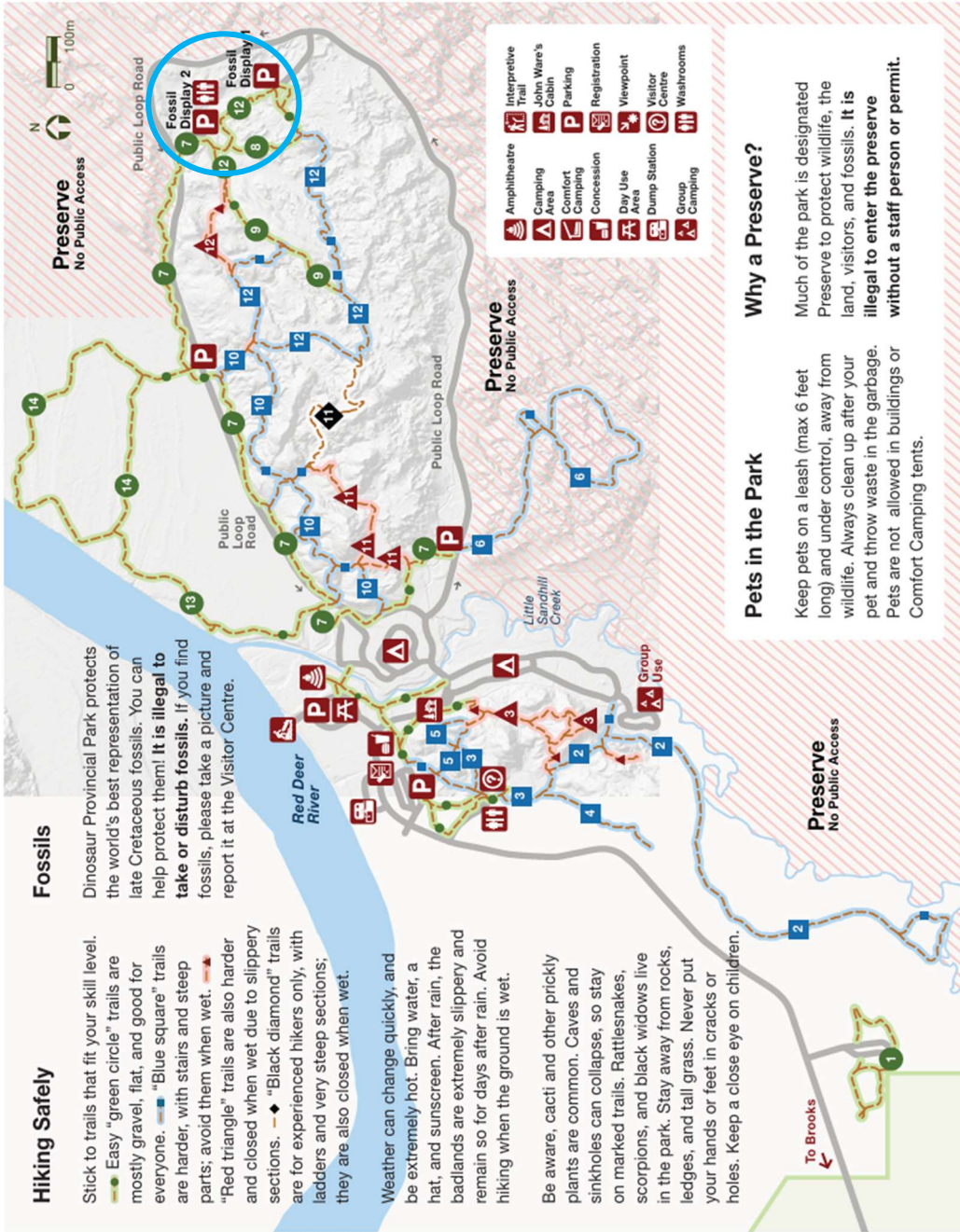
● Easy "green circle" trails are mostly gravel, flat, and good for everyone. ● "Blue square" trails are harder, with stairs and steep parts; avoid them when wet. ● "Red triangle" trails are also harder and closed when wet due to slippery sections. ● "Black diamond" trails are for experienced hikers only, with ladders and very steep sections; they are also closed when wet.

Weather can change quickly, and be extremely hot. Bring water, a hat, and sunscreen. After rain, the badlands are extremely slippery and remain so for days after rain. Avoid hiking when the ground is wet.

Be aware, cacti and other prickly plants are common. Caves and sinkholes can collapse, so stay on marked trails. Rattlesnakes, scorpions, and black widows live in the park. Stay away from rocks, ledges, and tall grass. Never put your hands or feet in cracks or holes. Keep a close eye on children.

Fossils

Dinosaur Provincial Park protects the world's best representation of late Cretaceous fossils. You can help protect them! **It is illegal to take or disturb fossils.** If you find fossils, please take a picture and report it at the Visitor Centre.



Pets in the Park

Keep pets on a leash (max 6 feet long) and under control, away from wildlife. Always clean up after your pet and throw waste in the garbage. Pets are not allowed in buildings or Comfort Camping tents.

Why a Preserve?

Much of the park is designated Preserve to protect wildlife, the land, visitors, and fossils. **It is illegal to enter the preserve without a staff person or permit.**

DAY FOUR, June 14: All Uphill

We crossed over into the Mountain Time zone yesterday, so being out of camp at 8 AM we've got an empty morning of nothing but driving, a late lunch and then a packed afternoon. Our first stop is the Lake Louise Gondola. Picture worth a thousand words here.



That's Lake Louise there at the bottom of the valley. We will be seeing that up close tomorrow.

Right after that, something that's been on my list a long time:

Johnston Canyon

This busy trail takes you into the depths of the canyon on wide paths hung from the side of the canyon, and narrow bridges with railings that lead to the Lower Falls and on to (optional) the spectacular 30 metre-high (can you convert to feet, mental math?) Upper Falls. For a unique perspective, continue 265 m further to the viewpoint at the top of the Upper Falls.

Lower Falls

Length: 1.2 km one way to the Lower Falls

Elevation gain: 50 m

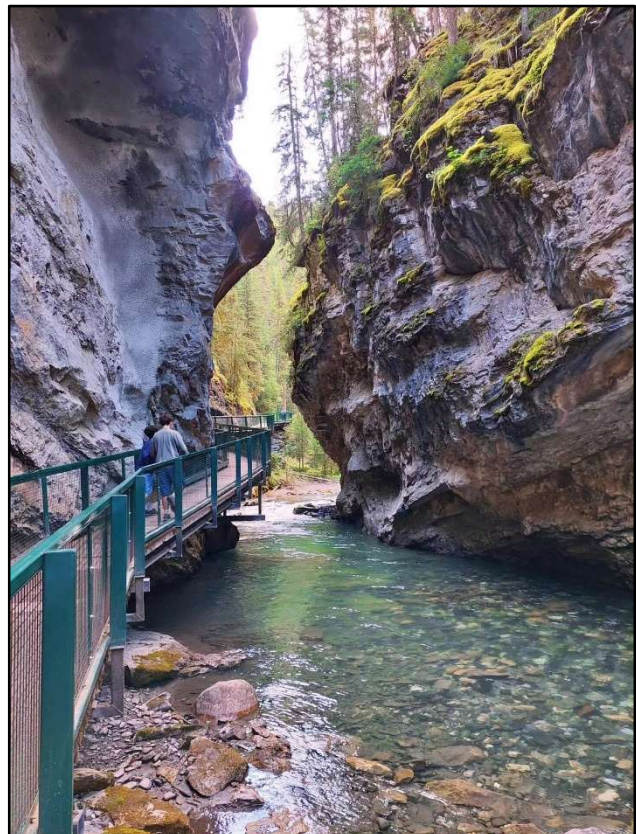
Hiking time: 1 hour round trip

Upper Falls

Length: 2.5 km one way to the Upper Falls

Elevation gain: 120 m

Hiking time: 2-hour round trip



DAY FIVE, June 15: Three Lakes and Over-The-Top

Moraine Lake and Lake Louise

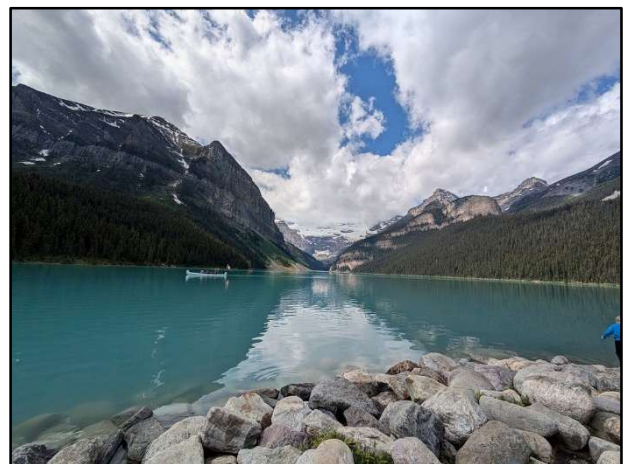
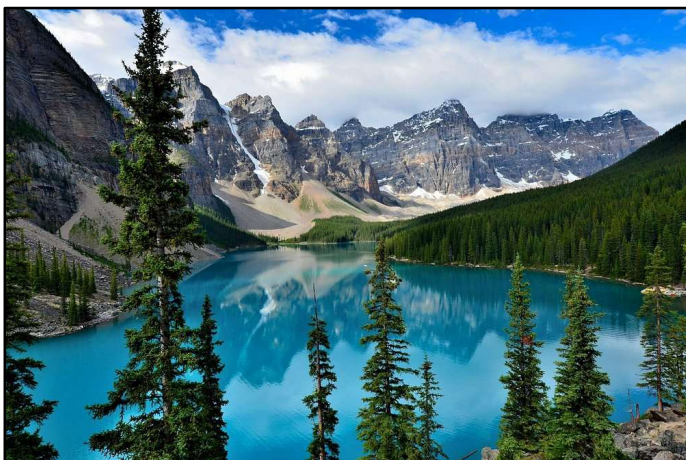
We have skipped over these in our past visits, but Janelle correctly identified them as must-see parts of the trip. Indeed, Lake Louise and Moraine Lake are among the most visited destinations in all of Canada. It's not hard to see why!

It also is not hard to see why we have not visited them in the past. You cannot drive to Moraine Lake at all, and there's only a tiny parking lot at Lake Louise, usually full by 4 AM! The only way to see both is on a Parks Canada shuttle bus, and I had no idea how hard that was going to be.

. We were scheduled to be there on June 15, and the website clearly said that reservations would not open until April 15. That should be fine, I thought, it's just the usual rolling three-month window as they use in many other places. For example if you want a campsite in Yosemite national Park, you have to be logged in and ready to hit the "reserve" button promptly at 8 AM, exactly three months in advance. There is a good chance that every spot would be taken within five or ten minutes. What I didn't realize was that April 15 is only TWO months in advance, and that the *entire summer* of reservations would be open on that day! So, between Josh and Ruth and I we opened about 8 windows, because what they do is put everybody who has a window open by 8:30AM gets put into a lottery for tickets. At 9 AM they do the drawing, and fortunately two of our windows came up fairly quickly and we got the reservations we needed (8:30 AM, leave camp no later than 7:30 AM MDT). As for the other windows, it said something like "estimated wait one hour, 50,000 people ahead of you."

And by the way, the only reason we need to leave camp so early is because the ONLY campsites still open when I tried to make reservations in March were these "modern" sites in town, 45 miles away.

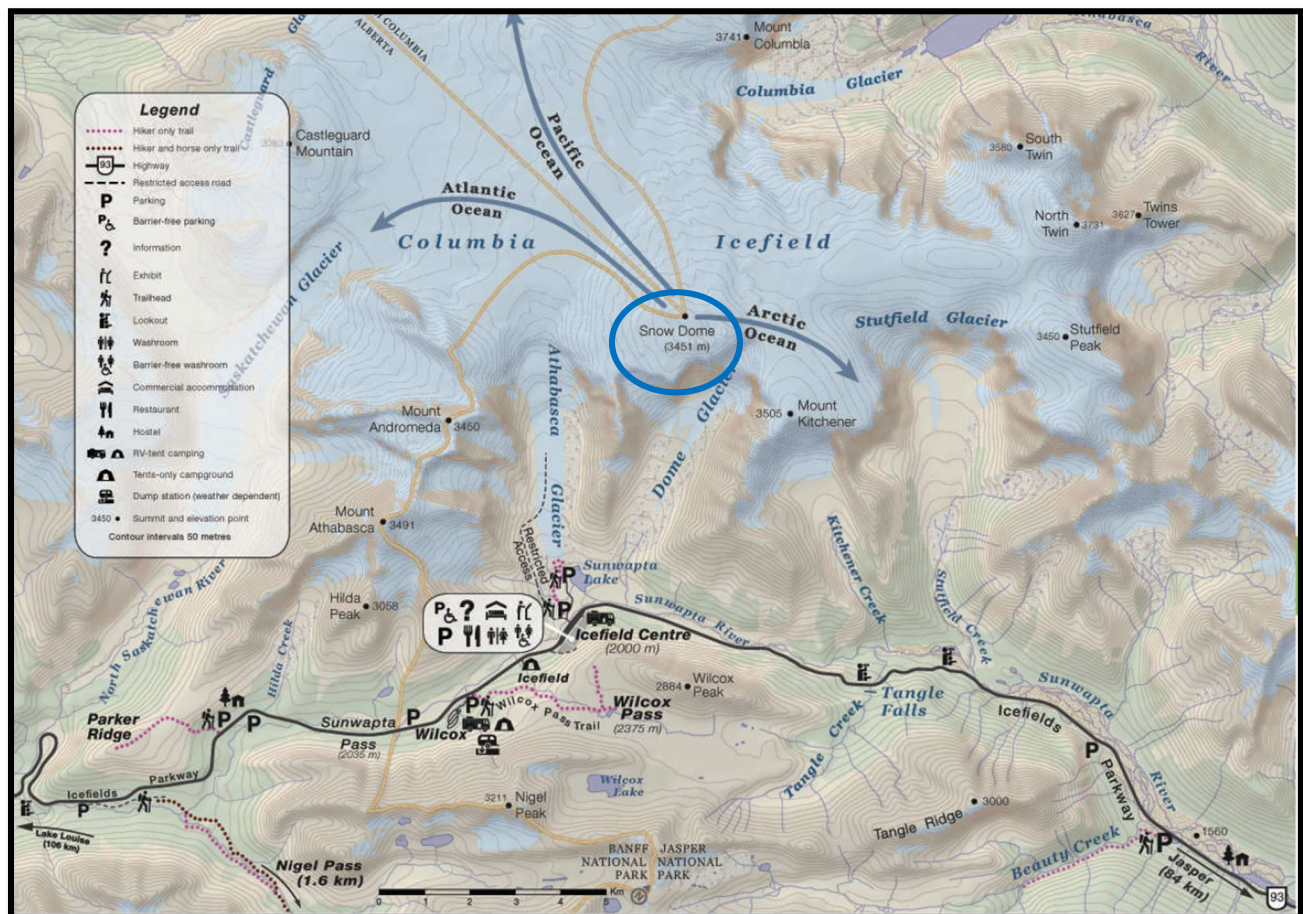
Anyway, we will be going to Moraine Lake first because that is supposed to be very pretty in the morning light. See that, then catch the cross-Lake bus to Lake Louise. Then back to the parking lot for lunch. A busy morning. And wait till you see the afternoon!

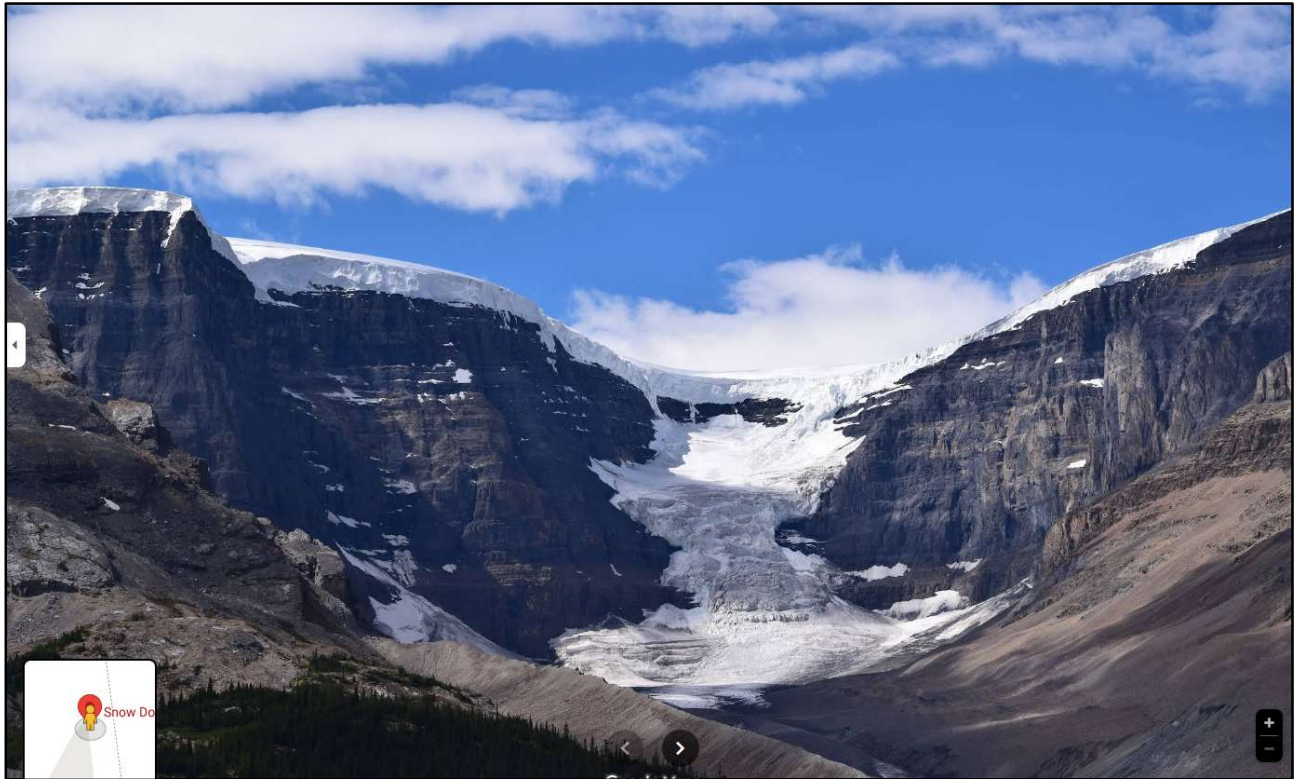


Peyto (pronounced pee-toe) Lake is a stunning turquoise blue glacier-fed lake. The brilliant blue is due to rock flour, which occurs as the glacier melts and the silt particles remain suspended in water. Peyto Lake is located in Banff National Park, Alberta, Canada. It is renowned for its vibrant turquoise color. The lake is surrounded by breathtaking mountain scenery, making it a popular destination for visitors and photographers. And right behind it is ANOTHER crossing of the Western Continental Divide at Bow Summit.



But this is just the beginning! You are traveling on the Icefields Parkway, a fantastically scenic stretch through the heart of the Canadian Rockies. Expect the possibility of wildlife and the certainty of majestic landscapes from the many viewpoints. In particular we will want to stop at one of the three viewpoints near the Icefield Center and take a picture of Snow Dome, one of only two triple divides (remember?) in all of North America (the other is in Glacier National Park in Montana).





It may look something like this, though I have never paid attention to it on previous trips. After that, it is all downhill, literally, but not in terms of the scenery. Below is the Athabasca River.



This is a full day. I expect that we will stop whenever there is something new or wondrous to see, but that we will need to quickly move on if we expect to be in camp at a reasonable hour. This will be one of our longest days. If we are making good time, and since we have been following the Athabasca River, it would be good to take the short hike to Athabasca Falls, our only other *scheduled* stop for today.



We will likely all be hungry by the time we get to the town of Jasper, so let's arrange to grab a bucket or two of KFC chicken on our way to camp. When the driver eats, I don't know. 😊

DAY SIX, June 16: Start of the Alcan

Try to get out early this morning and notice the beautiful view of the mountains to the West. Of course, that means we have to cross them again. Later.

I have a sense of anticipation about today. Once we get past the town of Grand Prairie, you will start to notice how few roads there are out here, and how few towns. What is, and probably will further be surprising to us, is how much more “civilized” or populated this part of the country has become since the discovery of oil (the “Oil sands”) and the development of those resources. For example, the town of Fort St. John (and there are a couple stories there, when we get to it), where we will camp tonight, had a population of about 12,000 people when Janelle and Josh were here in 1989. There are well over 24,000 people today. See what you can spot as evidence of this “oil boom” activity.



We will pass through a couple towns familiar to us, including Beaverlodge (look for the beaver) on our way to Dawson Creek, the start of the Alcan Highway.

Now Grandpa Shorty [*] had a lifelong dream to drive up the Alcan Highway, just as HIS father had the lifelong dream of visiting Yellowstone (see Story below). [My] Dad was able to fulfill [my] Grandpa Ewing’s dream, and we were finally able to fulfill his, in 1998. Yes, that’s him with the old Winnebago, and there are is a Story about that (see Story below and then one about Fort St. John’s, later).

I suspect Dad was interested in the Alcan because he was very much aware of how and when and why it was built. Much of that you can learn for yourself, or at least in the Visitor Center in



Dawson Creek. We will at least swing by the actual mile zero signpost downtown.

Song today: “North to Alaska” by Johnny Horton.



GRANDAD GOES TO YELLOWSTONE

My Grandpa Ewing was a farmhand all his life. You don't much hear the term anymore; we don't even hear the term "hired hand"; it's more likely "employee." But modernization and mechanization have changed farming. It is no longer necessary for farm employees to be, as granddad was, part-time farrier, [*] harness maker, cobbler, carpenter, blacksmith, and mechanic. Oh, and a gardener, remember he had six kids to feed, including two sets of twins 11 months apart; it was in all the papers at the time. Six kids with only three birthdays among them.

Anyway, the point here is that he never got a vacation. Daily care of the horses and other livestock simply didn't allow it. But he had always dreamed of some day going to Yellowstone National Park. I don't know whether he read about it someplace, or whether somebody had told him about it, but that was what he had always wanted to do. So after he finally retired from the farm, shortly after Grandma died (I think I was age 11, and this was the first funeral I ever attended) and before he had his first stroke, caused by eating his own cooking, my Dad said, "let's go to Yellowstone." Needless to say he jumped at the chance.

The first two days, as you probably know, are just a lot of driving followed by what were, for our family, a night in a cheap motel, about all we could afford. Two rooms, with Grandpa and I in one, Dad and Mom and baby sister Karen in the other. That was important to the story because at 5 AM every day he would be knocking on my parents' cabin door, "come on, let's go, day's half gone already!" [farmer time]

As a result of this early start, we actually passed through the eastern gate into Yellowstone about 9 AM. Granddad was so excited! It was only about 20 miles later that there was a bear or something on the road that we had stopped to see. Dad looked around to point it out to Granddad, and he was fast asleep! He had made it to Yellowstone!

I suppose I shouldn't complain too much about waking early, since I will ask you to do the same a couple times on this trip, but I had a pretty good reason, and the family joked about it for years. We had managed to secure a spot in the cabins near Yellowstone Lake. Nowadays, of course, almost every accommodation in Yellowstone is booked solid a year in advance. We did then what you simply cannot do now, which is to travel without reservations and just see where you end up for the night. Anyway, when I say cabins, we are not talking about modern facilities like you would find in any motel today or even thirty or forty years ago. These were small frame structures with no plumbing (you know what an outhouse is?). There was no insulation and no inner wall, just the bare studs sticking out, and in one corner a little wood stove for heat. People had scribbled all over the walls, and one piece stood out.



It was the classic World War II figure of "Kilroy," and underneath were the prophetic words, "Kilroy was here but he didn't stay, it was too darn cold."

So it was 5 AM the next morning I was the one banging on my parents' door, asking, "you guys got a fire in here? It's cold!"

THE GOOD LORD LOOKS AFTER US

When we took my folks to Alaska, as I have already mentioned, we took the Winnebago. It had served us well, but since the kids were no longer traveling with us, I think we were getting ready to downsize, and maybe somehow it knew. Off we went, not particularly expecting that God would need to provide for us, nor knowing this:

Psalm 121:8

"The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore."

But later, as we looked back, we realized that we had "broken down" no less than SEVEN times, and each and every time we were within sight of Somebody that could help us! I'm not sure I can actually recount the seven now, but let me see.

1. The first would have been almost the worst. We had just left the town of Fort St. John (more about that later) and were miles up the long, lonely stretch of the Alcan when the engine began repeatedly backfiring. It sounded like a machine gun, and we coasted to a dead stop at the bottom of a hill. What to do? Certainly nothing we could fix, but we could see, at the top of the next hill, a small restaurant. We were able to walk up there, use their telephone, and call a tow truck, who took us back to Fort St. John and the Chevy garage there. It turns out that a spark plug wire had become detached and fallen across the exhaust manifold, so every time that cylinder didn't fire, the gasoline would go into the exhaust manifold and the spark wire ignited it there. It was an expensive repair and we lost 1/2 a day, but back in those days, the schedule didn't matter as much and God had sent an angel for us by locating that little restaurant where it was.
 2. The next one was in Tok. We had stopped to see the End of the Alaska Highway sign at the Visitor Center there, and also to investigate why the battery was not charging and the engine was overheating. Opening the hood we quickly found both problems – the main fan belt was gone! Fortunately, right across the street was a service station, and the attendant nodded, reached up and grabbed the correct one for us. Don't recall whether he installed it or we did. Either way.
 3. We got into Anchorage and decided it was time for an oil change. As we tried to pull into the service bay, all of a sudden water splashed all over the ground! We had lost the water pump. As they were replacing that they noticed the brake cylinders leaking, so they fixed that. And the new muffler, damaged by the backfiring.
 4. At some point a stone knocked the drain plug out of her water tank. I think we just carved a nearby stick and taped it in there. I said God would provide; I didn't say how.
 5. That's all I can remember except to note that we joked for years about having to start with plan A, but then had to move on to plan B, C, and eventually to plan G, hoping not to need plan H.
-

By the way, there is another story about Fort St. John, surprisingly similar to the previous one. One of the things we always say about our trips is that we rarely if ever spend two nights in the same place, but here in Fort St. John, we actually spent THREE nights. So let me tell you how it was.

I had, as usual, gone to my new mechanic (you will see *that* story later) and asked as usual to check everything because “there is no time in the schedule for car trouble.” No reason to suspect anything but, since they had not failed me in the 15 or so years prior. In fact we made it up through Banff and Jasper, out the beautiful road along the Stikine River and into Prince Rupert. There, on a couple of the steep hills, we noticed a bit of engine “knock.” Bad gas, we figured, so we went ahead and got onto the Alaska Ferry and had a wonderful trip through Ketchikan and Juneau, and on to Skagway. Then we went up the Alcan, around the Alaska loop of Highways 2,3 and 4, then back to Tok, all the while with that little hesitation—it was NOT “bad gas.”

When we got to Tok we headed North across the Top of the World Highway. We stopped at the little town of Chicken [the early settlers wanted to call it Ptarmigan after the populous native bird, but they couldn’t spell it]. We decided against the “whole chicken dinner \$1” because it was, we figured out, just a fried egg. As we started over the pass towards Dawson City, we were having to downshift into low to get over that hill at the border station. We ferried across the Yukon to Dawson City and caught a tour boat down the Yukon to the tiny town of Eagle. Fascinating, including the “Eagle Mall,” a large tent selling native crafts and wares.

Back on the road, we were increasingly worried about our vehicle and decided to skip our “side trip” to Faro and Silver Creek, and head straight down the Alcan, with the vehicle stumbling all the way. When we finally got to Fort St. John, we barely made it up the itty-bitty hill just outside town and decided to go straight to our “favorite” Chevy garage, the one who had helped us before.

He was able to get us in almost immediately, and said even before looking at it, “I bet it’s your fuel pump.” About 30 minutes later, he came out and confirmed it, saying, “I don’t have one here, they have one down in Vancouver, but it will take three days to get it.” “Well, why don’t you fly it in; I’ll be happy to pay the extra,” I said. And I don’t know what to call his expression, but his tone was matter-of-fact, “Sir, that IS flying it in.” So 3 nights at the nearby RV park. How do you kill that much time?

Oh, and by the time he finished it was after 5PM and we had ruined two platinum (\$\$\$) catalytic converters. He called a buddy who stayed open to replace them for us, and we were finally on our way.



DAY SEVEN, June 17: Hot Springs

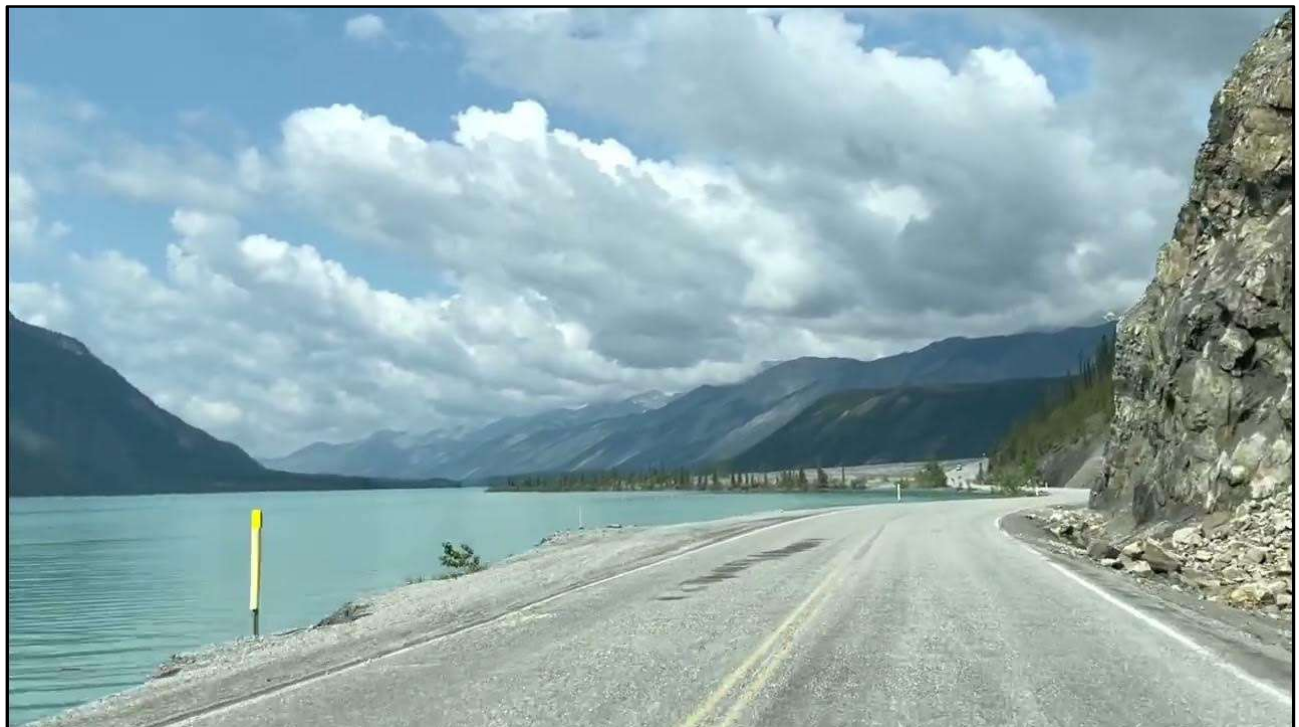
This is our first full day on the Alcan Highway. You can expect to see a lot of this



As we pass by the Sikanni River, Pink Mountain, and on to lunch in Fort Nelson.

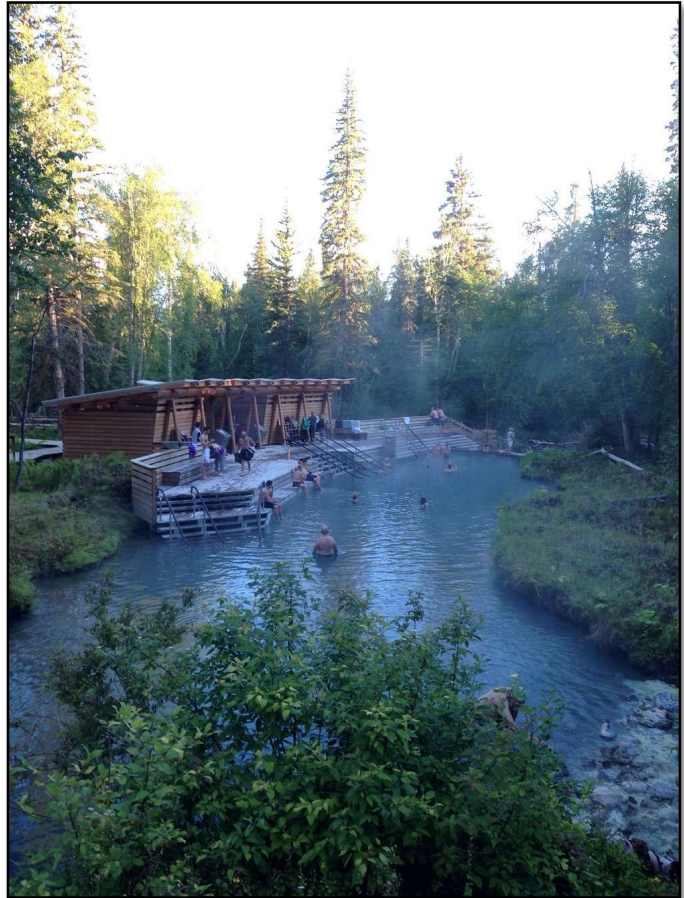
After lunch, again cross the continental divide (the one for the Arctic Ocean) at Summit Lake, which, at a staggering 1,295m (4,249ft), is the highest point on the Alaska Highway. Then we are

going to take the 12 km (seems much longer) “lakeshore drive” along beautiful Muncho Lake. Pay attention to your driving!



Finally we will arrive at the Liard Hot Springs RV Park. We would have stayed across the street, at the Hot Springs Provincial Park, but the campground there had a strict limit of four adults per campsite, and that just did not work for us. I hate to break it to you, but some of you are not kids anymore! Anyway, depending on timing, and what's on the menu we have to have supper and then go down and swim in the Hot Springs. Or vice versa.

Relaxation seeps into your body as you ease into the largest natural hot springs pools in Canada. Liard river hot springs is a river of hot water that provides relief to Alaskan bound travelers after a long day on the road. The hot springs complex is of national ecological significance and is well known for its natural setting in a lush boreal spruce forest. The park is such a popular stop over for tourists that the campground fills up early each day during the summer months. Liard is also open year-round. There is a hot spring open to the public with water temperatures ranging from 42° c to 52° c. Facilities include a change house and composting toilet. A boardwalk, which leads to the hot spring pools (a natural river of hot water), passes through a warm water swamp and boreal forest that supports rich and diverse plant communities as well as mammal and bird species.



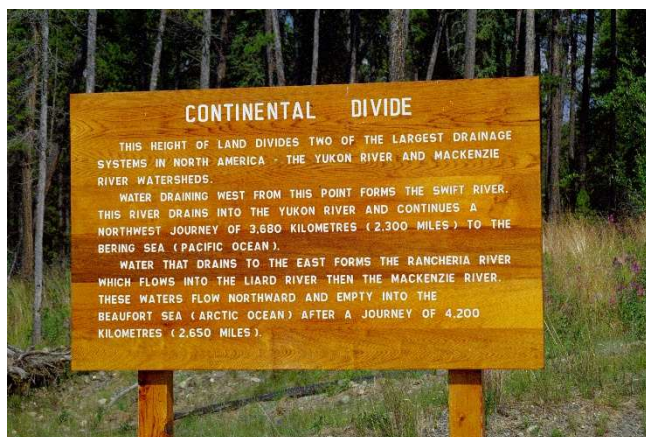
There are a few things you need to know.

- From May 1 to September 30, there is a day-use fee of \$5 for adults, \$3 for children or \$10 for families. Annual passes cost \$10 for adults and \$20 for families. **Fees are payable in cash, credit, or debit, at the park. OR MAYBE CASH ONLY?**
- Liard River Hot Springs Park is the first provincial park to have an electric fence installed. We will be keeping visitors and wildlife safe by reducing the number of human-wildlife interactions at the park.
- A beautiful 700-meter wooden boardwalk leads visitors through marshland and lush forest to the Hot Springs (10-minute walk to the hot springs). Along the way, keep an eye out for moose and other wildlife that frequent the area.
- Because you cross the marsh, I suggest wearing long sleeves and pants, and changing at the Springs. Shower when you get back. Some of the sulfur smell lingers.

DAY EIGHT, June 18: Signpost Forest

Another full day on the Alcan Highway. Today we will finally enter the Yukon Territory. In fact, we will enter it several times, as the highway weaves back-and-forth across the border! We will also cross the Continental Divide, the one that runs all the way from northern Mexico to the Arctic Ocean, someplace along here, look for the sign.

And I really do not know when to tell you to start looking, but if you spot them, they are



Here are the sheep. You will probably see them when we get to Denali. Maybe even beside the highways, licking the salt.



Take as many pictures as you like; you cannot possibly get it all in one photo.

No permit needed. You can bring your own sign or make one on site. The only problem you'll have is finding a place for it. OR finding yours already there!



usually quite far away and so you should announce "white dots!" These are Dall sheep, relatives of the bighorn sheep. Or they may be mountain goats, as I now realize are what is in this picture.



The main attraction today, of course, is the famous [Sign Post Forest](#) at Watson Lake.





The Sign Post Forest is Watson Lake's most famous attraction. Travelers from around the world have been bringing signposts from their hometowns to the Sign Post Forest since 1942 and continue to do so today.

The tradition began during the Alaska Highway Project in 1942, when U.S. soldier Carl K. Lindley spent time in Watson Lake recovering from an injury. A commanding officer asked him to repair and erect the directional signposts, and while completing the job, he added a sign that indicated the direction and mileage to his hometown of Danville, Illinois. Others followed suit, and the trend caught on. In 1990, a couple from Ohio added the 10,000th sign in the Signpost Forest. Today, there are over 77,000 signs in the Forest, and the number grows each year as visitors contribute signs and continue the tradition. The Town of Watson Lake maintains the site, adding more sign posts as they fill up. Bring along a sign to add to the forest, or make one at the Visitor Information Centre.

While you're there, you'll also come across pieces of equipment that were used during the construction of the Alaska Highway. A time capsule and cairn were placed at the Sign Post Forest in 1992. It will be opened again in 2042.

After lunch, we will take a short hike, just up the road, just a delightful spot as I recall. But it has been a while, since before most of you were born.

We want to stop just before we get to the Teslin River bridge and take a picture of it, and then we will travel alongside Teslin Lake for a while before having supper in Whitehorse. Before we get to camp, though, I want to make a quick stop at Miles Canyon. This again is a part of the Trail of 98, the Yukon River, which goes all the way to Dawson City and from there almost 2000 miles to the Bering Sea. I am sorry we do not have time for the three- or four-day detour to Dawson City, but we will pick up more of that story here and



later on in the trip. Meantime, notice what is peculiar about this part of the usually broad Yukon River. Now knowing that there is a large hydroelectric dam here that raised the water level some 30 feet, can you still imagine how the town of Whitehorse got its name?



Supper is at the Airport Chalet.

Throughout World War II, our airport buzzed with activity as brave pilots soared along the Northwest Staging Route, delivering indispensable supplies and personnel to Alaska and Russia.

In the post-war era, The Airport Chalet thrived as a gathering place for bush pilots. These dauntless aviators significantly contributed to the Yukon's growth, ferrying people, resources, and equipment to isolated locations across the territory.



DAY NINE, June 19: the White Horse

One of the things we've wanted to do but never had the patience or dedication to do, is to visit the Bering Land Bridge National Preserve south of Nome.

The **Bering Land Bridge National Preserve** is one of the most remote protected areas of the United States, located on the Seward Peninsula. The National Preserve protects a remnant of the Bering Land Bridge that connected Asia with North America more than 13,000 years ago during the Pleistocene ice age. The majority of this land bridge now lies beneath the waters of the Chukchi and Bering Seas. During the glacial epoch this bridge was a migration route for people, animals, and plants whenever ocean levels fell enough to expose the land bridge. Archeologists debate whether it was across this Bering Land Bridge, also called Beringia, that humans first migrated from Asia to populate the Americas, or whether it was via a coastal route.

Since we can't visit (There are no roads into or in the park; the only way in is by bush plane or boat), the Beringia Museum here in Whitehorse is not only the next best thing, but probably better. One of the crazy things about this part of the Yukon/Alaska is the number of Woolly mammoth bones found, buried in the tundra or in the ice. Here at the museum they have built a whole critter for us to appreciate.



This trip is badly out of historical order. Try to put the story of the Alaska Gold Rush of '98 (1898, not to be confused with the California Gold Rush of 1849, and why the football team is called the 49ers) together as we come across the pieces. Here we have a couple of those pieces. The



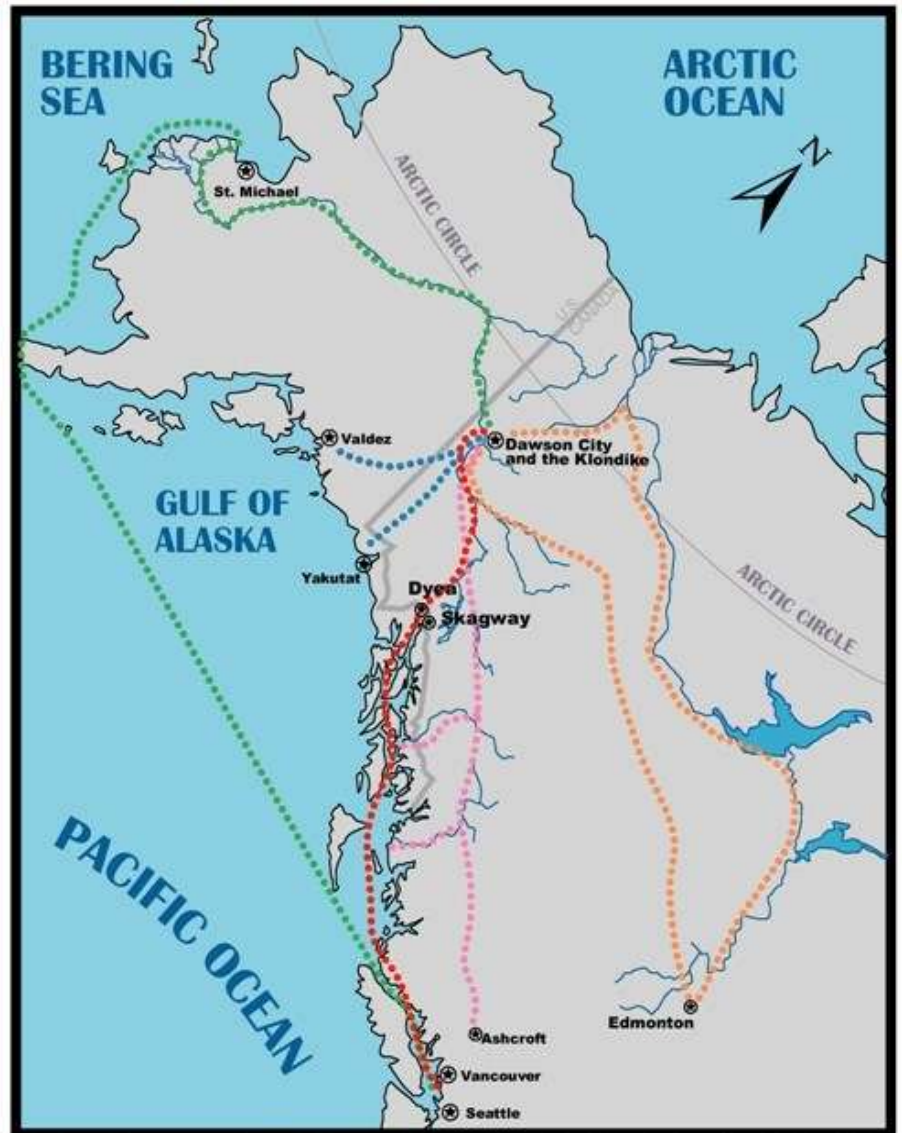
“Whitehorse rapids” you’ve already seen, but that actually marks the END of the arduous “Trail of 98,” which you will learn about when we finally get to Skagway a couple weeks from now. Right now you can see the SS Klondike, the Sternwheel steamboat that ferried the Yukon Gold Rushers on from Whitehorse to Dawson City, Yukon.

Unfortunately, we will not be able to follow the SS Klondike route and the Klondike Highway that replaced it some 50 years later. It would add at least 3 days to the trip. We will consider that after we leave Whitehorse this afternoon, when we pass the Klondike Highway turnoff.

Whitehorse is named after the historic rapids on the Yukon River, which resembled the flowing manes of charging white horses. On the “Trail of ’98,” the stampedeers had to bypass the treacherous waters of Miles Canyon and White Horse rapids, south of the present city.

The White Horse Rapids became known as the greatest peril on the Trail of ’98. The construction of the Whitehorse hydro-electric dam in 1958 tamed Miles Canyon and has replaced the once-foaming White Horse Rapids with Schwatka Lake Reservoir.

In 1897, two entrepreneurs capitalized on the obstacles presented by the canyon and the rapids by building tramways on either side of the river. For a fee, their horse-drawn tram cars carried goods and small boats around the rapids on log rails. a tent town called Canyon City appeared at the head of the tramway on the east bank. A roadhouse and saloon provided lodging and refreshments to the tens of thousands of gold seekers on their way to the Klondike.

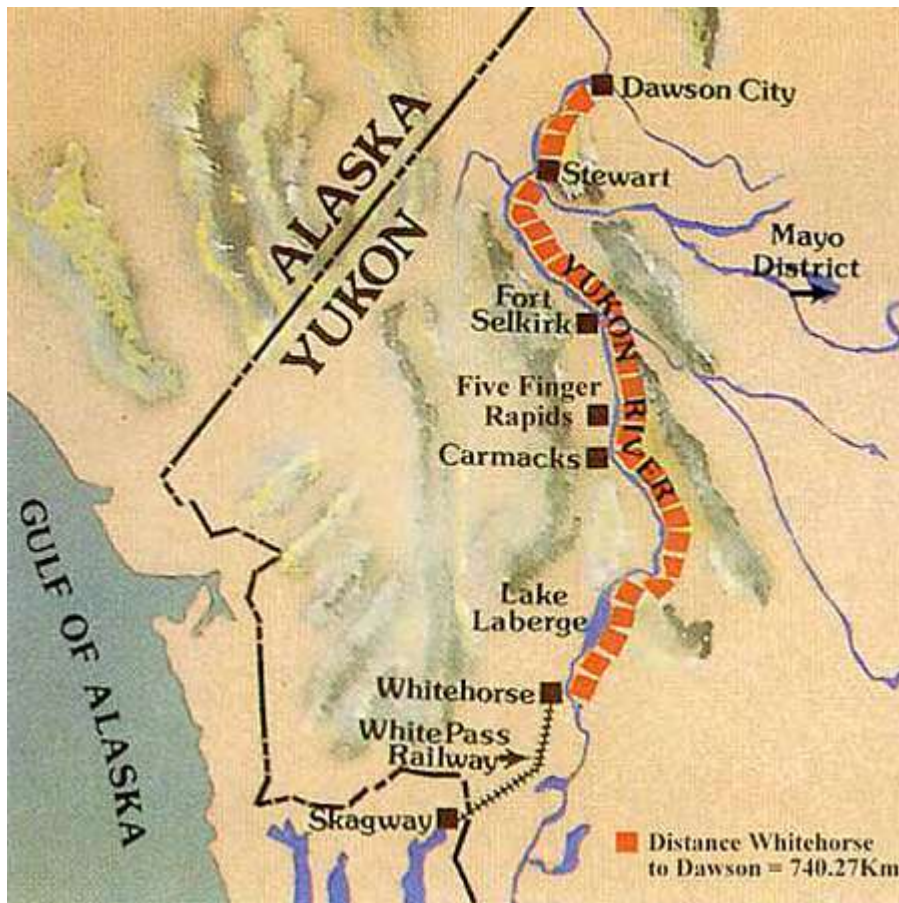


Trails to the Klondike Gold Fields 1897-98

- EDMONTON "BACKDOOR ROUTES"
- ALL AMERICAN "GLACIER ROUTES"
- ASHCROFT ROUTE
- ALL WATER ROUTE "RICHMAN'S ROUTE"
- CHILKOOT AND WHITE PASS ROUTES

From the web:

S.S. Klondike National Historic Site



The Whitehorse-Dawson run

At 3185 km (1979 miles) the Yukon River is the fifth longest in North America. The only serious obstacles to navigation along its entire length were Miles Canyon and the White Horse Rapids, which were bypassed by the White Pass & Yukon Route railway. Whitehorse, located immediately below the White Horse Rapids, was the “end of steel”, transshipment point for freight and base of operations for the British Yukon Navigation

Company (BYN) sternwheel fleet.

While not without navigational hazards, the upper Yukon River between Whitehorse and Dawson City was regarded as being relatively straight forward – the sorts of hazards encountered being typical of those found on most rivers on which sternwheelers were employed.

The downstream run

Carrying general merchandise and a few passengers, the S.S. *Klondike* would make the 740 kilometre (460 mile) downstream run from Whitehorse to Dawson City in approximately 36 hours. This included one or two stops to take on wood.

For the helmsman the downstream run was the most challenging, as the boat, moving with the current, would be travelling more quickly. Pilots had to be skilled at reading the water and handling the boat in order to stay in the main channel of the river. Often the paddlewheel would be reversed to slow the vessel and to help maneuver it.

Drifting a bend

Negotiating a tight bend on the downstream run was particularly difficult. When approaching a sharp bend the paddlewheel would be reversed to slow the boat and position it in the river. Then the paddlewheel would be disengaged, and the force of the current would carry the boat around the bend. Once around the bend the paddlewheel would be engaged full ahead to complete the manoeuvre. This was known as “drifting a bend”.

Shallows and bars

Whenever running a large boat down a shallow river there is a danger of running aground. There were four ways of getting a vessel off of a bar or shallows: washing the sand or gravel away with the action of the paddlewheel, offloading cargo to lighten the draught, running a line to shore and winching off, or sparring. The method selected depended upon the circumstances.



Setting a spar to get off a sandbar© Parks Canada / Reginald Martin Collection, #100

Of the techniques available "sparring" was the most spectacular. The spars were two large timbers equipped with block and tackle. When not in use they were lashed to the forward housing on either side of the main mast. When required they would be lifted from their seats on the foredeck and placed over the side through a chain collar onto the riverbed below. One or both spars might be used and they would be angled depending upon which was the way vessel was to be moved. Using block and tackle connected to the winch, the bow of the vessel could be lifted and the vessel moved, lurching three or four feet at a time. The operation would be repeated until the vessel was free.



The gas launch M.V. *Loon* was used to mark the channel© Parks Canada / Syd White Collection, #129, ca. 1946

Early each season a small work-boat would go down the river to mark the main channel that in sections where it would change each year.

Some pilots maintained detailed charts of the river, which needed to be constantly updated to reflect changing river conditions. Others preferred to rely on memory and their ability to read the river. In either case if there was any uncertainty about the depth of water a man would be positioned on either side of the foredeck (or at the front end of a barge, if a barge was being pushed) to sound the depth using sounding poles, marked with alternating black and white stripes.

"The Flats"

One area where a number of vessels grounded and where special precautions were taken was known as "The Flats". Located at the head of Lake Labarge where the Yukon River flowed in and deposited large amounts of sediment, the area was shallow with shifting channels. At low water levels the boats would sometimes back over The Flats -- dragging a chain to keep the bow from swing sideways -- the action of the paddle pushing water underneath the hull reduced the amount of water required to get over.

The upriver run

On the return run, the *Klondike* proceeded first to Stewart Landing 112 kilometres (70 miles) above Dawson City where she loaded sacks of silver-lead ore brought down the Stewart River from the Mayo mining district. Loaded down and fighting the current, the upstream leg of her journey back to Whitehorse could take four or five days with anywhere from five to seven wood-stops.

On the upriver run the speed of the vessel was almost half that of the downstream run allowing the helmsman ample time to pick a channel and set up a manoeuvre. For the fireman in the stokehold the upstream run was a different matter, as the increased power requirements meant that wood had to be fed into the boiler at a rate of more than a cord an hour.

Lining the rapids



Picking up the cable at Five Finger Rapids© Parks Canada / G.D. Bissell Collection, #95

At the major rapids – U.S. Bend, Hells Gate, Domville Bar, Rink Rapids and Five Fingers Rapids – steel cables permanently affixed to the shore were used to "line" boats up the rapids using the steam winch mounted on the foredeck. The operation

generally would take no more than half an hour but could consume a cord of wood.

At "Five Fingers Rapids" where four massive knuckles of rock split the river into five channels, blasting was also used to make the narrow eastern channel wider and more navigable. Blasting was employed at other locations along the river as well.

Spring ice on Lake Laberge



Lamp black on the ice of Lake Laberge© Parks Canada / W.E. Bamford Collection, #3

In the spring Lake Laberge remained icebound for several week after the river opened. A smaller sternwheeler, such as the S.S. *Keno*, was often over-wintered in a slough below Lake Laberge that was used to take an early season load of supplies

downriver, the supplies having been brought across the lake ice. This vessel would then head up the Stewart River and begin bringing ore, which had been stockpiled at Mayo over the winter, down to Stewart Landing.

Considerable effort was expended in attempts to hasten the breakup of Lake Labarge in the spring in order to lengthen the navigation season by a few precious weeks.



Marsh Lake dam© Parks Canada

A mixture of lamp black and used crank case oil was often spread along the lake ice to absorb the heat of the sun and promote melting. Its effectiveness was contingent upon a period of sunny weather and could be rendered useless by a late season snowfall. In any event once the ice had

disintegrated sufficiently a sternwheeler pushing a steel-clad barge would be used to open a channel.

In the 1920s, a dam was built above Whitehorse at the outlet of Marsh Lake. Water impounded the previous summer would be released in the spring raising the water level in Lake Labarge speeding the breakup of the ice.

Fall



The S.S. *Casca's* paddlewheel partially iced up© Parks Canada / F.L. Young Collection, #7

By mid-September, spray from the paddlewheel would start freezing on the rear of the vessels as they made their final runs of the season. By mid-October the ice would be forming on Lake Laberge. The sternwheelers were emptied and cleaned.

They then had to be hauled out of the water, jacked up and placed on wooden cribbing for the winter.

From rivers to roads

When roads were built in the region in the late 1940s, year-round transportation by land became possible, signaling that the end of the sternwheeler was near at hand. When the road to Mayo and Dawson was completed in the 1950s, the fate of the sternwheelers was sealed – roads were to replace the river as the focus of the Yukon's transportation system.

Related links [S.S. Klondike](#)

Moving Right along, Next Stop

The McBride Museum



Sam McGee's Cabin



the starting point for all of Yukon's history and present.

MacBride museum offers a half city block of indoor and outdoor exhibitions illustrating the Yukon's modern history. This outline of the galleries will help you navigate the Yukon's stories.

Aurora hall houses the northern lights icicle art installation;

First nations gallery

There are fourteen first nations in the Yukon and this gallery explores their stories as

The wild world

See an albino moose and thirty-five other special creatures up close and personal.

The gold rush gallery. Visit the land of gold. This gallery tells the story of the klondike gold rush and how that enticing shiny metal changed the territory.

Land and light gallery. From ancient times to the modern-day, the people of the Yukon have been profoundly affected by the landscape and have reflected this in their artwork and functional creations. Explore these objects and view the ted Harrison collection.

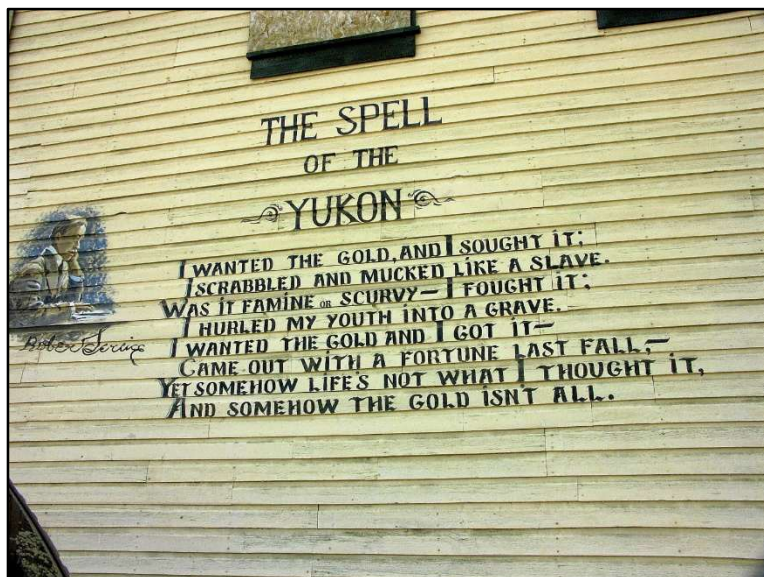
The cold chamber Learn how Yukoners live in a cold and isolated environment. See the clothing that lets us enjoy winter's most frigid days. Check out the temperatures in our cold chamber
The transportation courtyard with the woodchuck and the Sam McGee cabin - *Who is Sam McGee?*



DANGER! Drop by the gift shop full of unique gifts that reflect our galleries and stories.

By the way, we always stop at every state and provincial capitol building, and we are parked next to the Yukon capitol. It might be fun to take a quick look.

OK, let us talk about **what we are “missing”** by not going to Dawson City. That was the big Gold Rush “boom town” on the Yukon River. By midsummer of 1898 there were 18,000 people at Dawson, with more than 5,000 working the diggings. By August many of the stampeders had started for home, most of them broke. The next year saw a still larger exodus of miners when gold was discovered at Nome, Alaska. The great Klondike Gold Rush ended as suddenly as it had begun. Towns such as Dawson City and Skagway began to decline. It exists today because of tourism, with a lot of the old buildings still standing. One of the most interesting parts of the town is the heritage of Robert Service, “The Bard of the Yukon.” He was actually one of the few poets to actually make money, and his tiny cabin is still in use today, where actors come out and read some of his poetry daily. This one is painted on the side of Klondike Kate’s restaurant downtown:



Substitution #1 Rather than the evening Can-can show at Diamond Tooth Gertie’s Gambling Hall in Dawson City, we will attend the Days of 98 show in Skagway.

Perhaps his best-known poem is “The Cremation of Sam McGee,” republished here. Enjoy.

The Cremation of Sam McGee

By [Robert W. Service](#)

*There are strange things done in the midnight sun
By the men who toil for gold;
The Arctic trails have their secret tales
That would make your blood run cold;
The Northern Lights have seen queer sights,
But the queerest they ever did see
Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebarge
I cremated Sam McGee.*

Now Sam McGee was from Tennessee, where the cotton blooms and blows.
Why he left his home in the South to roam 'round the Pole, God only knows.
He was always cold, but the land of gold seemed to hold him like a spell;
Though he'd often say in his homely way that "he'd sooner live in hell."

On a Christmas Day we were mushing our way over the Dawson trail.
Talk of your cold! through the parka's fold it stabbed like a driven nail.
If our eyes we'd close, then the lashes froze till sometimes we couldn't see;
It wasn't much fun, but the only one to whimper was Sam McGee.

And that very night, as we lay packed tight in our robes beneath the snow,
And the dogs were fed, and the stars o'erhead were dancing heel and toe,
He turned to me, and "Cap," says he, "I'll cash in this trip, I guess;
And if I do, I'm asking that you won't refuse my last request."

Well, he seemed so low that I couldn't say no; then he says with a sort of moan:
"It's the cursed cold, and it's got right hold till I'm chilled clean through to the bone.
Yet 'tain't being dead—it's my awful dread of the icy grave that pains;
So I want you to swear that, foul or fair, you'll cremate my last remains."

A pal's last need is a thing to heed, so I swore I would not fail;
And we started on at the streak of dawn; but God! he looked ghastly pale.
He crouched on the sleigh, and he raved all day of his home in Tennessee;
And before nightfall a corpse was all that was left of Sam McGee.

There wasn't a breath in that land of death, and I hurried, horror-driven,
With a corpse half hid that I couldn't get rid, because of a promise given;
It was lashed to the sleigh, and it seemed to say: "You may tax your brawn and brains,
But you promised true, and it's up to you to cremate those last remains."

Now a promise made is a debt unpaid, and the trail has its own stern code.
In the days to come, though my lips were dumb, in my heart how I cursed that load.
In the long, long night, by the lone firelight, while the huskies, round in a ring,
Howled out their woes to the homeless snows— O God! how I loathed the thing.

And every day that quiet clay seemed to heavy and heavier grow;
And on I went, though the dogs were spent and the grub was getting low;
The trail was bad, and I felt half mad, but I swore I would not give in;
And I'd often sing to the hateful thing, and it hearkened with a grin.

Till I came to the marge of Lake Lebarge, and a derelict there lay;
It was jammed in the ice, but I saw in a trice it was called the "Alice May."
And I looked at it, and I thought a bit, and I looked at my frozen chum;
Then "Here," said I, with a sudden cry, "is my cre-ma-tor-eum."

Some planks I tore from the cabin floor, and I lit the boiler fire;
Some coal I found that was lying around, and I heaped the fuel higher;
The flames just soared, and the furnace roared—such a blaze you seldom see;
And I burrowed a hole in the glowing coal, and I stuffed in Sam McGee.

Then I made a hike, for I didn't like to hear him sizzle so;

And the heavens scowled, and the huskies howled, and the wind began to blow.
It was icy cold, but the hot sweat rolled down my cheeks, and I don't know why;
And the greasy smoke in an inky cloak went streaking down the sky.

I do not know how long in the snow I wrestled with grisly fear;
But the stars came out and they danced about ere again I ventured near;
I was sick with dread, but I bravely said: "I'll just take a peep inside.
I guess he's cooked, and it's time I looked"; ... then the door I opened wide.

And there sat Sam, looking cool and calm, in the heart of the
furnace roar;
And he wore a smile you could see a mile, and he said: "Please
close that door.
It's fine in here, but I greatly fear you'll let in the cold and
storm—
Since I left Plumtree, down in Tennessee, it's the first time I've
been warm."



*There are strange things done in the midnight sun
By the men who moil for gold;
The Arctic trails have their secret tales
That would make your blood run cold;
The Northern Lights have seen queer sights,
But the queerest they ever did see
Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebargé
I cremated Sam McGee.*

Notice the reference
to the “marge” of
Lake Lebargé. It’s a
beautiful lake, crystal
clear water and part
of the Trail of 98. I
offer this picture
since you will not get
to see it.



DAY TEN, June 20: End of the Alcan

Golly, you told everybody you were “going to Alaska” and here you are, only on Day TEN! Get out the cameras, there is a very nice sign here at the border. That’s Toots and Shorty following our own “trail of 98.” I don’t remember having to go through Customs anywhere near here, but I am told it is there now. I know there is one on the Top of the World Highway that comes across from Dawson City, all gravel and



mostly wilderness. That little outpost sits all alone amid miles of treeless arctic tundra, truly “middle of nowhere” at the top of a hill, and about 300 feet up the hill from that the little trailer where the Customs officer lives all summer. All alone. Can you imagine? You’ve already read a Story about that, and the towns of Chicken and Eagle, back on Day 6.

[Now if you notice some tall aluminum posts standing beside the highway, those are cooling towers. During the summer, the sunshine plus the road traffic heats up the pavement and the ground underneath, melting the permafrost, and the road sinks (called frost heave).. These towers carry the heat away so that doesn’t happen.]

Anyway, where we are trying to get (by lunch time) is the town of Tok and the end of the Alaska Highway. << See the marker?

There are other things to see here, but we have to go, like the lyrics to that old folk song “The Fox,” we have “Many a mile to go that night before he reached the town-o.”

By the way, you may have wondered why I take so many pictures. It is because with all the traveling we do, my memory just isn’t good enough. So I have almost a quarter of a million pictures on my computer, some of them I have included here, but even that is not enough! For a prime example, somewhere between the Alaska border and Anchorage, where we will be tomorrow night, is or used to be a little rest stop where you could see one of the world’s largest

living things. No, it is not a blue whale nor a redwood tree. It is in fact a large grove of aspen trees! They all grow out of a single underground root system, like grass or strawberries, and they are genetically identical so that the individual trees are called “clones.” I don’t know if we will even find it, but now you know what it is.

Anyway, right after lunch we have to take off on the Tok Cutoff, Alaska Highway 1. Interesting thing about Alaska is that if you drive down Highway 1, across Highway 2, and up Highway 3, you have pretty much seen all of central Alaska. We will travel a short stretch of highway 4, but the rest of *that* Story is coming up!

For the next few hours we will be driving along the Wrangell St. Elias National Park. Here’s a picture of some of that scenery, but as you can see, we made a stop to take a picture, as I am sure we will, but then the old Roadtrek wouldn’t start. We had to be towed into Tok. It seems the engineers at Chevrolet had made a small mistake. The heatshield over the muffler which was intended to protect the starter solenoid and starter motor from the extreme heat, actually broke off, fell across the starter contacts and took out the fuse for the starter motor. The tow driver/mechanic/owner knew the problem right away, and thanks to the ubiquity [look up the word] of Chevrolet parts and service, fixed it promptly and we were back on (almost) schedule.



Hopefully our picture stops will not be that long, because what we really need to do is to get to the Visitor Center for the Wrangell St. Elias National Park before they close at 5 PM. It is perhaps the only way to appreciate the enormous size of this, the largest US national Park. Great Park film if we get there in time.



I took this picture on one of our trips.



In total, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve hosts 14 peaks that are over 14,000 feet, with the highest, Mt. St. Elias, over 18,000 ft. (Denali is still taller, 20,310 ft.)

The only ways to penetrate this vast wilderness, where they don't even name some of the mountains, just refer to them by their height, is by bush plane, or by taking a terrible road from Copper Center to the "ghost" town of McCarthy and, of necessity, spending the night at the old Kennicott hotel, refurbished from when it was the barracks for the copper miners. They would mine and smelt the ore and ship it down the nearby Copper River to the Copper River Delta, past the Copper Glacier and from there to the market.



Copper was a big deal, but never matched Gold's impact, culturally or financially.

We will not be traveling that 60 miles because, when we were there, 15 mph was a bone jarring speed; it was that rough. When you get to the other end there is a small parking lot, and you pick up the telephone at the end of the bridge so that they come down and pick you up in a gas-powered golf cart and take you to the hotel. From there you can actually walk back to McCarthy,



Old Kennecott copper smelter

what used to be the “entertainment” for the miners, but which is now respectable little coffee shops and gift shops. You can also go visit the huge old smelter and, at least when we were there, walk a barely-there footpath upstream and walk on the (dirty) glacier you can see here.

We will have supper at a place that should be familiar to some of you, the Caribou Hotel. [NEWS FLASH! THE HOTEL WAS BURNED TO THE GROUND IN NOVEMBER!] The restaurant remains open.



If you can get Josh or Janelle to tell you the story about why this picture is significant, that might help, but I will tell you what I remember, see the Story, below:

The Good Time Chariot

We had waited patiently at the Portage Glacier Visitor Center, admiring the view of the icebergs floating in the lake, until it became our turn to drive through the longest (2.5 mile) train/auto tunnel in the world to the little town of Whittier. They allow cars to go one way for the first half-hour of every hour, car traffic the other way for the second half-hour, and no auto traffic when the train goes through a couple times a day. We were in time (as planned) to catch the ferry across Prince William Sound (the site of the famous Exxon Valdez oil spill) to the town of Valdez, the end of the Alaska Pipeline that comes all the way down from the Arctic Ocean at Prudhoe Bay. [That's *another* little "side trip."]

(continued next page)

From there, we travel up a series of steep switchbacks over the coastal mountains (the route some of the prospectors of the Yukon Gold Rush took to Dawson city) and down onto the nice road which is Alaska Highway 4. About 60 miles north of Valdez, smoke started rolling out behind the camper! We bailed out, unsure of the cause, and to our good fortune, a passing gravel truck slammed on his brakes, and quickly used his fire extinguisher to prevent what might have been considerable damage. We barely had time to thank him – frankly we were still in a bit of shock – before he moved on. We obviously needed a tow truck, and the driver had said that we could get one at The Hub. "Just up the road." All well and good, but this was long before cell phones. The nearest phone that I could imagine was at the pipeline pump station about a mile back up the road. The security was understandable and it took me a while to even be allowed through the gate, and when I asked to use their telephone, there was quite a bit of polite laughter. "We will *radio* them for you," they said.

Well, nothing to do now but wait, and as it turns out, it is about 60 miles, a little over an hour, from what was then "The Hub," a small gas station/repair shop/convenience store to where we were. (It has since grown into the little town of Glenallen.) Great. Tow all hooked up and ready to go except for one small legal problem. "Only the driver can ride with me," the tow driver said, "and nobody is allowed to ride in the vehicle." There was naturally some considerable concern about the other four people standing here beside the road, and this is where Divine Providence stepped in. A psychedelic-painted bus, reminiscent of the Partridge Family, and sporting a broad banner that said "Good Time Chariot Travel Club," stopped, quickly recognized and happily solved that little problem. I assume there was hymn singing? The Lord doth provide.

So we were at The Hub, and the owner/driver/mechanic quickly determined that the problem was a burned-out transmission. Then it gets interesting. "I don't have one here," he said, "but they have one down in Anchorage and they will hold it for me. I will leave now, pick it up as soon as they open tomorrow and be back here about noon." Oh, fun. Where do we sleep? We can have supper at the Caribou Hotel, but the hotel is full for the night, so we go down to the makeshift bunkhouse for the Alaska pipeline workers, where they have set aside a few rooms for us – communal bathrooms down the hall. Breakfast again at the Caribou Hotel restaurant, and then walk back to The Hub and wait. And wait.

(continued next page)

Starting right about noon, after he returned, it took him about five hours to replace that transmission, and by way of explanation for the \$1500 (1989 prices) equipment failure he told me, "Looks like they shorted you on transmission fluid at your last service." Make a note of that. So after a quick snack at the convenience store, we started out about 5 PM. This was a problem (remember "we don't have time for this in the schedule"?) because we had ferry reservations out of Haines, 600 miles away, the next morning. Now whether it was planning or good fortune, Jason was sixteen years old at the time and could drive, so between the three of us we drove straight through (thanks to the midnight sun we had some light all the way) and made our ferry reservation with an hour or two to spare. We enjoyed the rest of the trip.

But for me, that isn't the end of the story. We got home, unpacked, rested up a little bit, and prepared to go back to work on Monday (if I recall correctly). At any rate, about 9 AM I got a call from my lifelong traveling companion, saying something like, "I went to back the camper out of the garage [it has always been our second car] to go to church and nothing happened; it wouldn't move." "Well, just call a tow truck," I said. Later I would get a call from my traveling companion that when they hooked up to the rear of the camper to pull it out of the garage, and lifted it up, the rear wheels fell off (rear wheel bearings burned up)! It turns out that, even after my instructions for a complete pre-trip service, the Apple Valley Chevrolet service department had **also** shorted me on differential fluid! And when I asked them what part of my expense they were going to reimburse, the answer was, shall we say, 100% UNsatisfactory. So I have been going to my current Chevrolet service in Bloomington ever since, telling them where I am going and to do a complete pre-trip checkout, warning them never to disappoint me, and so far they have not, with one forgivable exception (see previous Story Day 6) never have. Fingers crossed for all of us this trip.

DAY ELEVEN, June 21: Memories to Anchorage

Today is Summer Solstice, the longest day of the year. Maybe you have noticed the very late sunsets? Here is the science for today:

For Sun, Jun 21 2026 Time zone: Alaska (GMT-8)

Midday at: 14:01

Length of day: 19:21 (17-1/2 hours)

Civil Twilight Start: **Does not occur**

Sunrise: 04:21

Sunset: 23:42

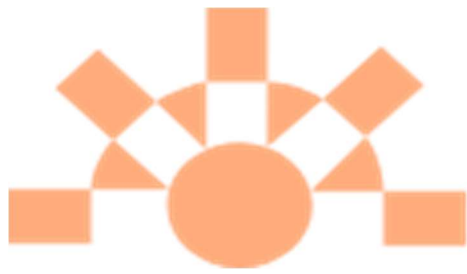
Civil Twilight End: **Does not occur**

The sun has already been up for hours, so we are getting an early start today because we have reservations at the Musk Ox Farm.

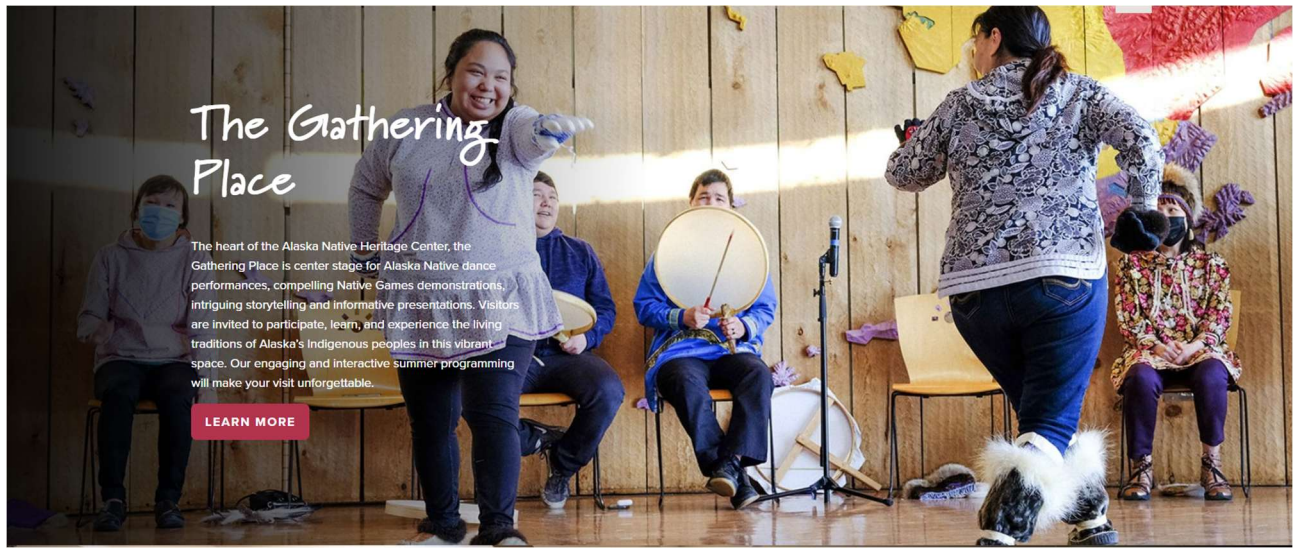
The nonprofit Musk Ox Farm is dedicated to the gentle husbandry of the musk ox, an Ice Age mammal that once roamed the earth alongside saber-tooth tigers and woolly mammoths. From the Inupiaq language, "Oomingmak," means "The Bearded One." This once-endangered animal produces an annual harvest of qiviut (kiv'-ee-yoot), one of the finest natural fibers in the world.



We welcome visitors to the farm for a close-up experience of these magnificent Paleolithic ruminants with guided tours, engaging exhibits, and our gift shop featuring some of the world's only gently hand-combed qiviut fiber, qiviut yarn, and qiviut garments.



ALASKA
NATIVE
HERITAGE
CENTER



The Gathering Place

The heart of the Alaska Native Heritage Center, the Gathering Place is center stage for Alaska Native dance performances, compelling Native Games demonstrations, intriguing storytelling and informative presentations. Visitors are invited to participate, learn, and experience the living traditions of Alaska's Indigenous peoples in this vibrant space. Our engaging and interactive summer programming will make your visit unforgettable.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Just minutes from downtown Anchorage, the Alaska Native Heritage Center (ANHC) is Alaska's premier cultural destination representing all Alaska Native peoples. More than a museum, ANHC is a vibrant living cultural center where you can discover the traditions, languages, and arts of Alaska Native cultures through live cultural programming and exhibitions.

Explore life-sized Village Sites, see the first monument in our Healing Garden, and learn from dynamic exhibits in the Hall of Cultures. Enjoy cultural demonstrations and performances on the Gathering Place stage. Watch short films and documentaries in the Theater, shop for authentic Alaska Native art in the Ch'k'iqadi Gallery or from Alaska Native artist vendors on-site, and grab a tasty snack or drink from Café Di'eshchin. Whether you're seeking an unforgettable family adventure or a deeper understanding of Alaska's first peoples, ANHC offers an authentic, immersive experience that brings Alaska Native cultures to life.

Substitution #2 and #3 Rather than seeing the Native Dancers in Sitka, [*] OR the Eskimo Games in Kotzebue (look them up on a map to see how “out of our way” they are), we will hopefully get a flavor of both here at the Alaska Native Heritage Center.



1:15 PM	Alaska Native Heritage Center Overview	Guided Tour (1:15 PM to about 2:45 PM)
1:30 PM	Intro to Alaska Native Cultures	
2:00 PM	Cultural Presentation	
2:15 PM		Guided Tour (2:15 PM to about 3:45 PM)
2:30 PM	Intro to Alaska Native Cultures	
3:00 PM	Alaska Native Games Demonstration	
3:30 PM	Alaska Native Dance Performance	
4:15 PM	Alaska Native Heritage Center Overview	

Now, rather than THEIR picture of the Eskimo Games, let me tell you a story.

We always try to schedule our trip so that we are in Alaska for the longest day of the year, June 21 or 22. But a couple of times we have stayed until July 4th, because that day is really special out in the native villages. In Kotzebue, they hold a big July 4th parade in the morning (big being a relative term, the whole fire department, a couple cars/trucks with dignitaries and the local marching band. It lasts about 20 minutes, and there is plenty of space on the street to watch it. But THEN, everybody adjourns to the local fairgrounds and the Eskimo games begin. [By the way, this is done on July 4th because it is the earliest they can depend on all the ice being out of the river so that the tribe can gather.] Many of these games run at the same time. There is the Miss Arctic Circle pageant, and I have the ONLY picture taken of the contestants that day, and for a long time it was actually posted on the Kotzebue website. There was only one other tourist with a camera that day, taking a trip planned with his wife but after she passed, he was doing this in memory of her, and he did not take that picture.

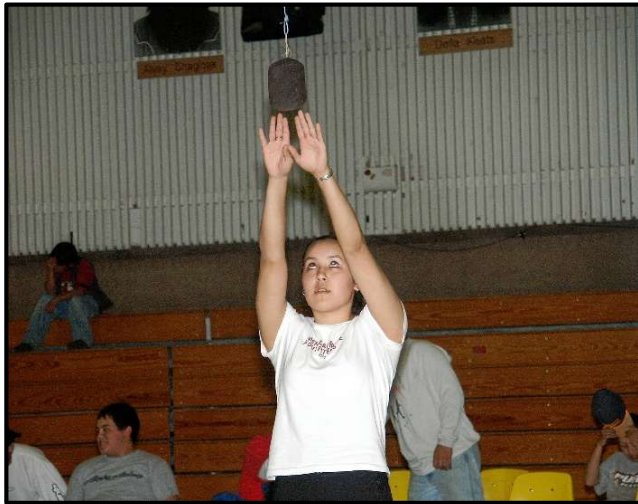
Then, of course, there was the blanket toss, the muktuk eating contest, [*] and the “Prettiest Baby Contest.” What was amusing here is how each baby was introduced. “Little ____ is wearing an outfit sewn by his Granny _____. His parkie (parka) is made of caribou and trimmed with otter. The



hood is made of fox and lined with wolf. The boots are sealskin trimmed with wolverine.” It was really more of a fashion show!

Then more foot races, snowmobile skipping (over the lake) but by evening they adjourned to the local gym for more athletics, like the two-hand carry. Most impressive was the high kick contests. They had men’s and women’s, two-foot and one-foot, and it lasted a long time. The object of the game is to stand flat-footed on the floor, jump up and kick a small fur ball

suspended from the ceiling. They would keep raising the fur ball, just like a high jump, until a winner was determined, by kicking the highest. [* Barrow]

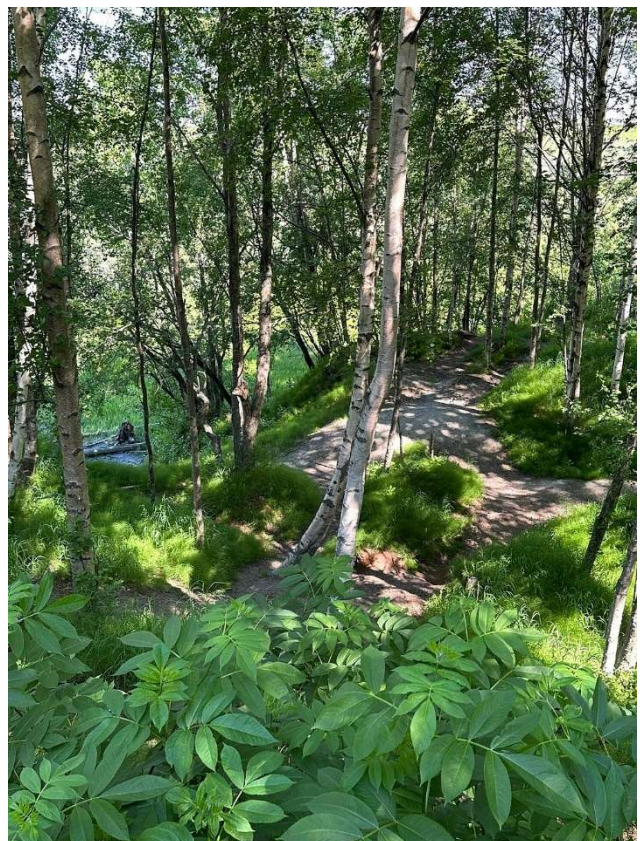
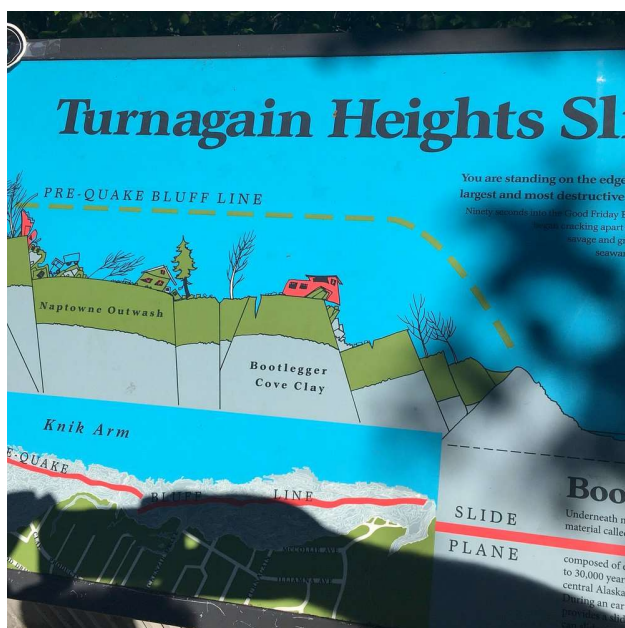


on her feet. Perhaps not impressive in and of itself, considering that the men's state record is TEN FEET, and I don't know if she even won. But these are my favorite pictures of the evening.

But I was most impressed with one little girl, maybe Lauren's size or a little shorter. She was standing on her tiptoes to steady the fur ball, and then in the next moment she jumped up and kicked it, AND, per the rules, landing back



If we have time, it might be interesting to take a little walk in Earthquake Park before supper. Mother Nature has almost erased the signs of the massive landslide that occurred here back in 1964 (3 years before Janet and I were married), but there is still a little evidence of it if you look, and of course there are signs and such to help you appreciate the size. But this massive slide was small compared to **Valdez**. (next page)



The Good Friday earthquake (Matthew 9.2) struck on March 27, 1964, with its epicenter only 45 miles **west of Valdez**. Shaking lasted more than five minutes, tearing apart streets, buildings, and docks.

1. Submarine Landslide and Dock Collapse

A huge underwater landslide—millions of cubic yards of sediment—collapsed beneath the Valdez waterfront. This sudden failure destroyed two docks and swept people, vehicles, and structures into the bay. 31 residents, mostly children waiting on the dock for the *SS Chena*, were killed.

2. Seiche Waves and Additional Damage

The submarine slide generated large seiche waves in Valdez Bay, causing further destruction to the waterfront and low-lying areas. ***A large slice of the mountain slid into the sea and caused a tsunami that was 220 ft high!***

3. Ground Failure Throughout the Town

The quake ripped streets apart, damaged homes, and destroyed buildings. Total damage was estimated at \$15 million (1964 USD). (about \$150 million today)

Why Valdez Could Not Stay Where It Was

Post-quake investigations by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers found that the entire townsite sat on unstable glacial outwash and deltaic sediments—the same materials that had failed catastrophically during the quake. Engineers concluded the ground could not be stabilized enough for safe rebuilding.

This made Valdez fundamentally different from Seward or Anchorage: the land itself was unsafe for future occupation.

Relocation of Valdez (1964–1967)

Because the original site was deemed permanently hazardous, federal and state authorities decided to move Valdez to a new location. That's where the Alaska Pipeline ends today.

GET SUPPER, GET SOME GROCERIES, MAYBE DO SOME LAUNDRY. DUMP.

DAY TWELVE, June 22: Anchorage to Denali

I don't know about all of you, but some of us are getting up early and going to Potter Marsh. If you don't want to go, we will meet you at the Statehood Monument in about an hour.

Potter Marsh, at the southern end of the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge, is an ideal break from Anchorage for birders and other wildlife viewers. From the Seward Highway just before the left turn into the Potter Marsh parking lot, you are treated to a stunning view of Turnagain Arm. [* beluga] A wooden boardwalk winds 1,550 feet from the parking area through the marsh and across watery openings and sedges, perfect habitat for a rich variety of birds.

From May to August, gulls, Arctic terns, shorebirds such as yellowlegs, and occasionally trumpeter swans are present during spring and fall migration.



Sloughs that crisscross Potter Marsh provide habitat for waterfowl.



Yellowlegs at Potter Marsh.

About halfway along the boardwalk, Rabbit Creek flows underneath and provides a good spot to see spawning chinook, coho, or humpback salmon from May to August, depending on the species. Spot their bright red bodies swimming in the creek.

With its nearly panoramic view of Turnagain arm, Potter Marsh, buffered by spruce, cottonwoods and alders, is one of the most accessible and scenic wildlife viewing areas in Anchorage.

Substitution # 4: Usually we would go from here south to the town of Seward. We would stop at the great Sea Life Center aquarium and watch the puffins "fly" underwater, and then take a small boat cruise out into Kenai Fjords National Park. For want of time we will not be doing that, but there is a story worth telling, at once both cautionary and enlightening.

We took the Kenai Fjords boat tour with Mom and Dad, and decided on the "deluxe" tour that included a salmon dinner on an island. Well, the salmon was cold, and the 6-foot rolling waves for the rest of the trip made all but a hardy few seasick. Very hard to enjoy beautiful scenery when you're trying hard just to keep a cold salmon dinner down.

Something good did come out of it. There are tall "sea stacks" that rise out of the sea and serve as nesting places for thousands of seabirds. So the captain announces "look, there is a very rare ancient murrelet" and here I am, on the front of the boat going up and down 6 feet with each wave, trying to manually focus and set exposure behind my long, 600mm telescopic lens! When I got home I said, "I need a camera smarter than me," and bought one of the first auto-exposure, autofocus digital cameras (a Konica) and never looked back.

[*digital]

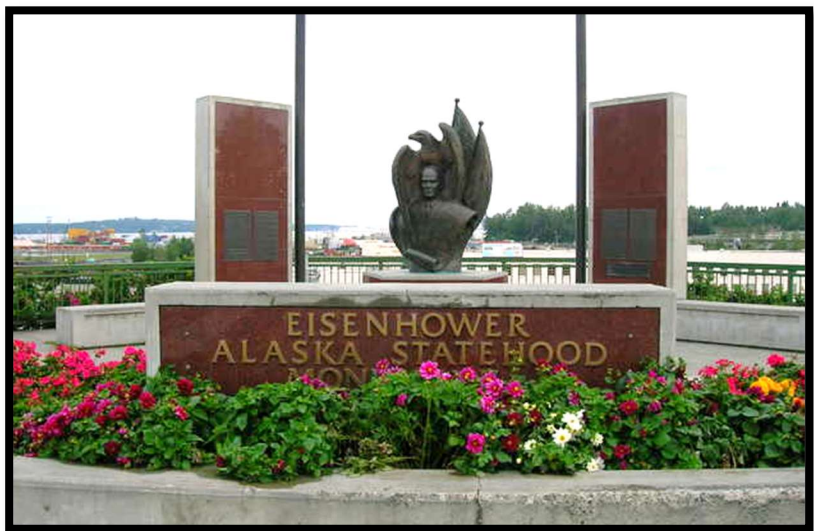
Eisenhower Alaska Statehood Monument - Anchorage, Alaska

This Alaska Statehood Monument in Anchorage features a bust of Dwight Eisenhower. As President, Eisenhower signed the legislation making Alaska the 49th U.S. state. This small monument, tucked away from downtown and near the railroad station, is significant for a number of reasons.

- First of all, obviously, it commemorates the admission of Alaska as the 49th State on January 3, 1959, in a proclamation signed by then-Pres. Dwight D Eisenhower.
- Eisenhower is the first president that I can remember, and presided over a culture and economy that many of us still remember as the “good old days.”
- Thanks to movies like “Patton” and others, I have an appreciation for what Gen. Eisenhower did commanding the landing at D-Day and the subsequent victory over Germany in World War II.
- And it is a reminder that, for Josh, this was his 49th state to visit, followed the following year by Hawaii as the 50th, and he has the plaque to show he did it by age 12. Janelle did it at 15, of course, but I am guessing how much she remembers of it. :-)
Hopefully you all will do better!

It isn't that impressive, but here is a picture, and you do need to get out and read all the information. Anything else you can learn about Pres.

Eisenhower is a plus. (**The Eisenhower Presidential Library, by the way, is in Abilene, Kansas**).



The Eisenhower Alaska Statehood Monument

Anyway right down the hill from here is the Ulu Factory. You can watch these great tools being made, and if you happen to need one, say for the muktuk eating contest, [*] here is your chance to get one at factory direct prices. (Tip: get the board with it.) We use ours a lot, especially for chopping pickles.



Okay, nobody goes to Alaska without going to Denali National Park. And even though there are actually EIGHT National Parks in Alaska, this is the most popular because it is by far the easiest to get to. [Maybe there is a Story about how we visited all of them.] Now one of the curious things about Denali is how it “hides.” There is a great viewpoint about halfway between Anchorage and the National Park-- Denali State Park – but I don’t know that you will be able to see the mountain from there. Or from anywhere in the National Park! You see, the mountain is so high and cold that it makes its own weather. As soon as the sun hits it in the morning (4AM, remember) clouds start to form and by midday at the latest, most days, it is entirely hidden from view. When it is hidden in clouds, of course, it cannot be seen, and a lot of people look at that tall mountain in the center of this

picture and assume that is Denali. It is not. And even when it is not locked in clouds, as you can see here, the snow-covered mountain blends into the clouds and the bright sky. Look again.



After we arrive, we will settle into our campground (I got the last two open sites), try to see the Visitor Center, have a cookout (did I mention we bought hamburger in Anchorage?) And maybe turn in a little early. Reveille is at OH 5-30 tomorrow. That’s the bad news. The Good news is we’ll have a much better chance of seeing the mountain, a much better chance of seeing wildlife (first bus into the park), an earlier lunch and a better chance of getting into Fairbanks for seeing the great 4PM show at Pioneer Park.

WHY SO EARLY?

Good question. I tried for the 7:30 bus, but every time I tried to reserve for thirteen people it said Max ten, and when I tried to reserve for nine it said, reduce your request, so I cried for seven, then four, and it kept saying "reduce your request to one or less." So I called and they told me, there was indeed only one seat left on the 7: 30, and that everything else that day was booked, but they could get all of us on the 6 AM bus. Do I need to bring a bugle?

Song: “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy” by the Andrews Sisters

DAY THIRTEEN, June 23: Denali to Fairbanks

Good Morning, Campers! Complete your morning ablutions, gastronomies and preparations because we will need to leave camp this morning no later than 5:40 AM to catch our 6 AM Denali tour bus at the bus depot. Maybe things should have been all laid out the night before?

Now in the past we would have stayed at the Teklanika campground, about 30 miles into the park, and then we would have taken either the Eielson Visitor Center bus or the longer route to Wonder Lake. But staying at Teklanika requires a three-night stay and there are no hookups, which fits neither our time constraints nor our hookup requirements. More importantly, the road isn't there anymore! There was a terrific landslide at the Pretty Rocks/Polychrome Pass area, where the road hugged the mountainside and the rear end of buses hung over the side of the cliff as they went around sharp turns. They have had to actually build a bridge where the road used to go, and you can see from this picture what a serious landslide it was.



Anyway, we can still go up to mile 43, where the bus stops for a while and lets you look around the



braided river, a fascinating landscape in my opinion. The bus also stops for any wildlife we encounter, though

often just the "Denali view." I [*]>>

What I am hoping to do, since we cannot go to Eielson and take the short nature trails there, was to have the bus drop us off at Sable Pass, the highest point on the park road still open, either before or after the turnaround, and take some pictures of the alpine wildflowers.

[Just talked to the ranger and apparently that's verboten. "Bear habitat." Darn.]



Legend:

- Activity
- Food/Drinks
- Museum/Display
- Shopping
- 1 Cabin/Building #
- Information
- Parking
- Restroom
- ATM
- Telephone
- Picnic Table
- Potable Water
- Public Bus Stop
- All Park Entrances are Accessible

Map Labels: Paddlers Cove, River Walk, Alaska Land Lane, Folk School Workshop, Tanana Valley Railroad Museum, Playground, Disc Golf, Moose Creek Picnic Shelter, Volleyball, Park Maintenance, Wilderness Picnic Shelter, Canoe Alaska, Chena River, Crooked Creek & Whiskey Island Railroad, Purchase Train tickets in Cabin 26, Railway Lane, Alaska Land Lane, Prospect Mini Golf, The Folk School, Purchase tickets in Cabin 26, Square Dance Picnic Shelter, Dance Hall, Mining Equipment, Pick 'n Poke Gift Shop, Alaska Salmon Bake, Mining Valley Tunnel Entrance, Mining Valley Pond, Bartlett Plaza, Alaska Centennial Center for the Arts/ Bear Gallery, Fairbanks Arts Association Office, Elevator Access, Shaw Lane, Gold Rush Town, Riverboat Nenana, Gazebo, Harding Railroad Car, Gold Rush Town Entrance, Main Entrance, Alaska Land Lane, Centennial Lane, Griplink Lane, Lavelle Young Wheelhouse, Lovelle Lane, Palace Theater, Hensley Lane, Pioneer Museum, Big Stampede Show, Moore St., Shaw Lane, Moore St., Shaw Lane, Moore St.

Businesses and Services:

- Shopping:**
 - Palace Emporium
 - Henna4Lovers
 - SunDog Studio
 - Oh So Wonderful
 - Just North of Normal
 - Great Alaska Bowl Company & Art by Chantelle Marie
 - Charms by CJ
 - \$5 Gift Shop
 - Perspectives and Possibilities Alaska
 - A Tale of Six
 - Bean's Books
 - Powerful Creations
 - Old Time Photo
 - JMac Creations
 - Just Originals
 - Blobbify Books and Gifts
- Food/Drinks:**
 - Cheechakos Tacos
 - Souvlati
 - Gold Rush Ice Cream
 - Sour Sisters AK
 - Frosty Paws
 - Sourdough Dances
- Activity:**
 - Big Stampede Show
 - The Palace Theater
 - Pioneer Park Activities Center
- Museum/Display:**
 - Pioneer Museum
 - Kitty Hensley House

Contact Information:

(907) 459-1087
pioneerpark@fnsb.gov
www.fnsb.gov/parks

Map Details: The map shows the Chena River flowing through the park. The Mining Valley area includes a tunnel entrance and a pond. The Gold Rush Town area features a riverboat, a theater, and various shops. The map also shows the Alaska Land Lane, Shaw Lane, and Moore St. The Chena River is shown flowing through the park, with the Crooked Creek & Whiskey Island Railroad crossing it. The map includes a compass rose and a scale bar.

Page 55 of 90

Operated by the Pioneers of Alaska

During the summer season this show provides a narrated presentation of original artwork by Rusty Hurlin depicting life in Alaska during the Gold Rush Era. Josh and Janelle should remember the old Pioneer. [*]

Cost:

\$4/adults (16 & older)

\$2/children 6-12 years old

Children under 6 are FREE

Hours: Four shows daily 11:30 am - 4:00 pm.

Then look around the Park or go straight to the Alaska Salmon Bake for supper.



[Dinner Reservations](#) Not Necessary for Groups of 15 people or less. I recommend you have salmon at least once while you are in Alaska!

• BIG BAKE DINNERS •

ALL OF OUR BIG BAKE DINNERS INCLUDE: A CREATE-YOUR-OWN HOUSE SALAD, ROASTED ROSEMARY POTATOES, CHEF'S SELECTION OF SEASONAL HOT VEGETABLES, PASTA SALAD, A FRESHLY BAKED ROLL FROM ALASKA FLOUR COMPANY, OUR HOUSE-MADE CONDIMENT AND SAUCE BAR, AND A BOTTOMLESS FOUNTAIN BEVERAGE.

WILD ALASKAN SALMON

Sourced from the pristine waters of our great state, our wild salmon filets are grilled to perfection over an open fire and basted with our secret sauce 29.95

DAY FOURTEEN, June 24: Riverboat & North Pole

OK, Everybody up, we don't want to miss the boat. We have an 8:15AM departure on the Riverboat Discovery.



Susan Butcher, the four-time Iditarod champion. Along the way, you'll encounter reindeer and see how salmon is prepared for the sled dogs. After docking at Chena Village, disembark to experience the traditional lifestyle of early Athabaskan people. Finally, re-board the steamboat for a relaxing return trip to Steamboat Landing there you will be able to purchase unique Alaskan gifts, AND have our reserved lunch:

Embark on a 3-hour tour that takes you through the rich history of Fairbanks. Your adventure begins aboard an authentic steamboat, where you'll learn the stories of early prospectors who journeyed to Alaska in search of fortune. Next, witness a live bush pilot demonstration and enjoy scenic views of historic landmarks along the Chena River. Your journey will take you past Trail Breaker Kennel, home to sled dogs, to learn about the legacy of



WELCOME TO DISCOVERY DINING HALL	
MENU Hearty Miner's Beef Stew Roasted Vegetable Couscous Apple Pecan Salad Bread Rolls German Chocolate Brownies	BEVERAGES Free: Iced Tea, Hot Tea, Coffee, Water For Purchase: Soda Beer & Wine
ADULTS -- \$24.95 CHILDREN \$14.95	

Remember to call ahead for our oil change! 907 456-7945

While we are waiting, we can talk about a couple of things we will NOT be doing. One of them is the Fairbanks Ice Museum. It is right downtown and it would be very hard to find parking for RVs. It is also small, kind of pricey and frankly it just isn't that impressive, certainly compared to what Fairbanks has on display during the International Ice Carving Championship in February. Besides, you can see ice carving during the Saint Paul Winter Carnival, or go to Eagle River, Wisconsin for their Klondike Days. *"Eagle River stalwart and business owner, Trig Solberg, of [Trig's Stores](#) has been a major sponsor and supporter of Klondike Days right from the beginning..."*



The other thing we will NOT be doing is visiting the Georgeson Gardens. It isn't much fun without short people like Shorty, and it is a bit early on the season to see what 24 hours of sunshine can do for your garden cabbage. [[*potato](#)]



Then, let us get an idea of where that oil comes from. They have an informative display of the Alaska Pipeline just north of town.



Among other points of information, notice the "feathers" on that nearest support post. Those serve the same purpose as the cooling towers you saw on the Alcan Highway, preventing the heat from the hot oil from melting the permafrost and causing the pipe to sink into the ground.

This was an amazing engineering feat. **The Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) is 800 miles long and the main construction phase took about 3 years (1974–1977).**

It goes from Prudhoe Bay on the Arctic Ocean to the port of Valdez on Prince

William Sound in the Pacific. It bridges over rivers, climbs mountains and is elevated for much of its length so that, like the highways the hot oil does not melt the permafrost and cause the pipeline to sink into the ground. Therefore, you can see most of it by traveling up Alaska Highway 4 from Valdez to Delta Junction (but you may understand why, from a previous Story, we are not

too crazy about Highway 4) and then up the “pipeline haul Road” (Dalton Highway) that follows the pipeline 414 miles, all the way to Prudhoe Bay. Here is that Story:

UP THE “HAUL ROAD”

One of the great adventures of an Alaska trip is to drive up the haul road to the start of the Alaska pipeline. I do NOT recommend that. You need to be aware that most of the route is made of heavy crushed rock, hard on tires but even harder on windshields, especially when the large trucks passing you going the other way kick them up into your path. We did the sensible thing and booked a van tour, two days up and one day back, but we didn't come back with the tour, and of course that is another Story.

We had booked this tour with a guy named Terry, an old sourdough that could arrange a number of these semi--adventurous excursions, including the Kamchatka Peninsula in Siberia, to see the big brown bears. So it was kind of a surprise when the van pulled up and Terry was not driving. It wasn't very far into the trip before that question came up, and then the driver told us *his* story.

“I have my own tour company,” he said. “But whenever Terry needs any help or an extra driver, I am there for him. Here is why. I was running a horse tour up the river in the fall, and we got hit by a freak early blizzard. Everybody, including the horses, all died. I walked away, some 20 miles, and almost got to the Haul Road. Terry saw me, stopped his truck and saved my life. I will always be glad to repay him for that.”

We crossed the wide Yukon River, where there are some displays talking about the engineering challenges of the Pipeline (including crossing the wide Yukon River) and then we crossed the Arctic Circle, where there is a sign where everybody takes a selfie (although there was no such thing as a selfie when we were there). And someplace along here we understood WHY you do not drive your personal vehicle up this road. There were several large cracks in the van windshield, and the question was why he didn't have that replaced. The answer was that the insurance simply agrees to replace one windshield per year, and of course on this road it is necessary every year. Pretty sure we picked up a couple more cracks on the way.

Halfway up is – I don't want to say town, more like a service plaza – called Coldfoot [wonder why]. Motel (trailers), restaurant, huge gas station, that's about it, except for, believe it or not the National Park Visitor Center for Gates of the Arctic National Park. We had arranged for a bush plane to pick us up here and fly us over the Park that evening, but because of smoke from forest fires, the plane was unable to fly that route. How we finally got to actually see that Park is, of course another Story. This Visitor Center is NOT in the Park. We stopped to stamp our Parks Passport and said, “this is the last one.” The nearby ranger asked “so which is your favorite” and we worked on that list for the next 5 days. And there's a story THERE. There are no visitor facilities in the park, no roads to the park, no roads in the park, not even any trails in the park. You could walk over there, of course, but it is 5 miles across soft, brushy, untracked tundra and two rivers, plus nothing but more of the same when you got there.

(Continued next page)

No thanks. We spent the night not in Coldfoot, but in the little town (like 5 houses, plus a few modern cabins) of Wiseman. The mosquitos were terrible. The next day, just before we crossed up over the Alaska range, there is another photo stop, where a little sign says, "Last Tree. DO NOT CUT." It really is the last tree, the furthest north. After crossing the pass over the Alaska Range, there is nothing but the flat, treeless "Arctic desert" (flat tundra) of the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). My first reaction was, "what's all the shouting about?" There was a great uproar from the environmentalists when the Pipeline was being built, and there is continual objection to ANY oil drilling. I guarantee that none of these environmental activists have actually been to ANWR. I have, and there is a whole other Story that needs to be told. Maybe now?

The environmentalists were very concerned about oil drilling near the coast of the Arctic Ocean (Prudhoe Bay) because that is where the massive caribou herds came to feed and give birth during the summer. But the pipeline got built, and it starts at the end of the Haul Road at a little outpost called Deadhorse. A sign on the barracks tells women "where the odds are good, and the goods are odd." As for the poor caribou, I think the environmentalists were wrong. You will see caribou up on the haul road because there are fewer mosquitoes there. On cold days they will stand under the pipeline because it is warmer there. And we are warned to keep the hotel door closed because, "if you don't, the caribou walk in and eat at the salad bar." When last checked, the herd is TWICE the size it was before the pipeline.

Other wildlife, too, seem unperturbed by the oil industry presence. Noticing that the hotel front clerk desk had a camera just like mine, I asked if some of the pictures on the wall were his, particularly a bright white Arctic Fox standing in a snow bank, and asked him where that was taken. "Right out the front door here," he said.

By the way, you can dip your toes in the Arctic Ocean here if you want. Not on my list.

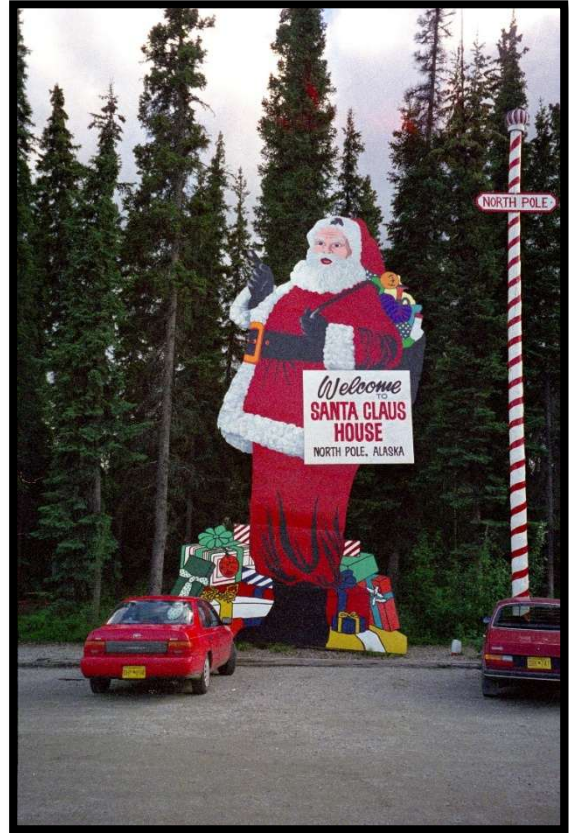
The oil companies give a wonderful presentation which again shows how wrong the knee-jerk environmentalism can be. The Eskimo population, for example, encourages the oil exploration because it can provide economic benefit with minimal environmental damage. New wells, for example, are set up during the winter. An ice road is laid out to the new site, a gravel pad is built (to protect the permafrost), and the well sunk, which, with slant drilling, can reach hundreds of feet in any direction. A small pipe is laid back to Prudhoe, the road melts and the only thing remaining is that city-lot-sized gravel pad, that the caribou like to hang out on. The oil industry currently occupies essentially ZERO% of ANWR. We went on to Barrow from here, but that's a different Story! 😊 [*]

We have come as far north as we're going to go this trip. From here, we're going to go south to the North Pole!

When Con and Nellie Miller arrived in Fairbanks, Alaska in 1949, they had \$1.40 in cash and two hungry kids. Determined to carve out a living in the new territory of Alaska, Con soon became a merchant and fur buyer in the surrounding villages. Donning an old red Santa suit each Christmas, Con earned celebrity status as Santa Claus in the eyes of the village children - the first St. Nick many had ever seen.

By 1952, the Millers had decided to build a trading post thirteen miles south of Fairbanks. One day, while hard at work on the new store, a young Alaskan boy recognized Con and asked, "Hello, Santa Claus! Are you building a new house?" Inspiration clicked, the new store would be called "Santa Claus House!"

The years passed, and Santa Claus House saw the addition of a new wing - as well as a 42 foot tall, 900 pound, three-dimensional Santa Claus statue, perfectly placed just outside the store to welcome all both the young and young-at-heart to Santa Claus House. Built in the 1960's by Wes Stanley of Stanley Plastics, the Santa statue found his permanent home at Santa Claus House in 1983. Guests can meet Santa, explore festive décor, and browse a wide selection of Christmas gifts and souvenirs inspired by holiday tradition. Overnight in Tok.

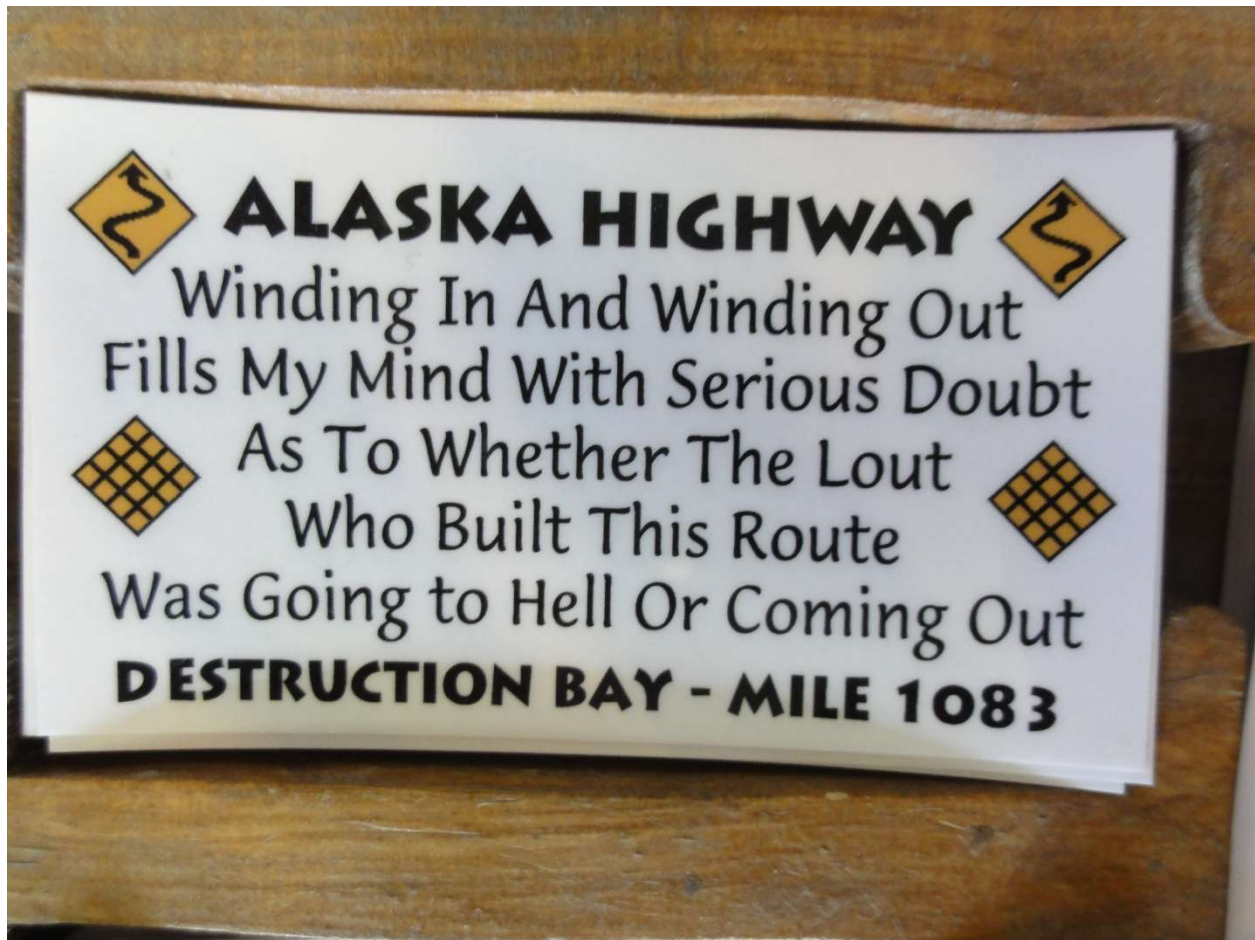


DAY FIFTEEN, June 25: Long Ride to Oceanside

We will be traveling back down the Alcan past Kluane National Park. **The Kluane–Wrangell–St. Elias complex is:**

- One of the largest protected ecosystems on Earth.
- The largest international (transboundary) protected area in the world.
- Home to the highest coastal mountains and some of the largest glaciers outside Antarctica and Greenland.

We are having lunch in Destruction Bay, where we found this sign:



From there we travel past:

- Kluane Lake and the St. Elias Range near Haines Junction
- The *Former* Kroschel Wildlife Park.
• (see photo >>) and Story (next page))
- Chilkat River Valley (bald Eagle refuge) descending into Haines



This is one of the most spectacular drives in Alaska/Yukon.

The Sad tale of the Kroschel Wildlife Park

On the way to Haines, way back on the Mosquito Lake Road, we crawled through the gate and got a private tour of this wonderful facility. [*] But now government has stepped in...



Steve Kroschel has been an independent filmmaker for the past 34 years and a wildlife interpreter/ethologist for most of his life. He owns and operates a wildlife park near Haines, Alaska for mainly orphaned wildlife indigenous to Canada and Alaska . Steve cares for moose, wolves, grizzly bears , wolverines and many other creatures ; and opens his wildlife park to visitors from around the world that come by car, plane or cruise ship. Steve Kroschel freelances for Walt Disney Pictures, Paramount Pictures, Lionsgate, Universal and many others. He has made or contributed to over 200 natural history documentaries and has recently released three humanitarian films on Grounding the body. Officials from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the Alaska State Troopers executed a search warrant Thursday at the Kroschel Wildlife Center in Haines, which led to the confiscation of dozens of animals, including wolves, martens, a wolverine, a fox, a lynx, and a porcupine.

According to state officials, the **confiscated** animals are being transported to licensed facilities, including the Alaska Zoo in Anchorage and the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center in Girdwood. Smaller animals were airlifted from the Haines Airport, while larger animals, such as moose, caribou, and a grizzly bear, were transported overland, crossing the Canadian border en route to their new homes in Southcentral Alaska.

The wildlife center, operated by filmmaker Steve Kroschel, housed more than 60 animals and was a popular tourist destination known for offering close-up, educational encounters with Alaskan wildlife.

DAY SIXTEEN, June 26: Ferry Trip to Skagway, on to Juneau



Experience a day in the life of the “Skaguay of 1898” at the height of the Klondike Gold Rush. This colorful vaudevillian musical gives you a front row seat to it all – the frills, the thrills and the chills. Whoop it up with can-can girls in rowdy dancehalls. Adventure alongside desperate stampededers clambering for gold. And feel the terror of Skagway citizens under the reign of Jefferson “Soapy” Smith – Alaska’s most notorious outlaw.

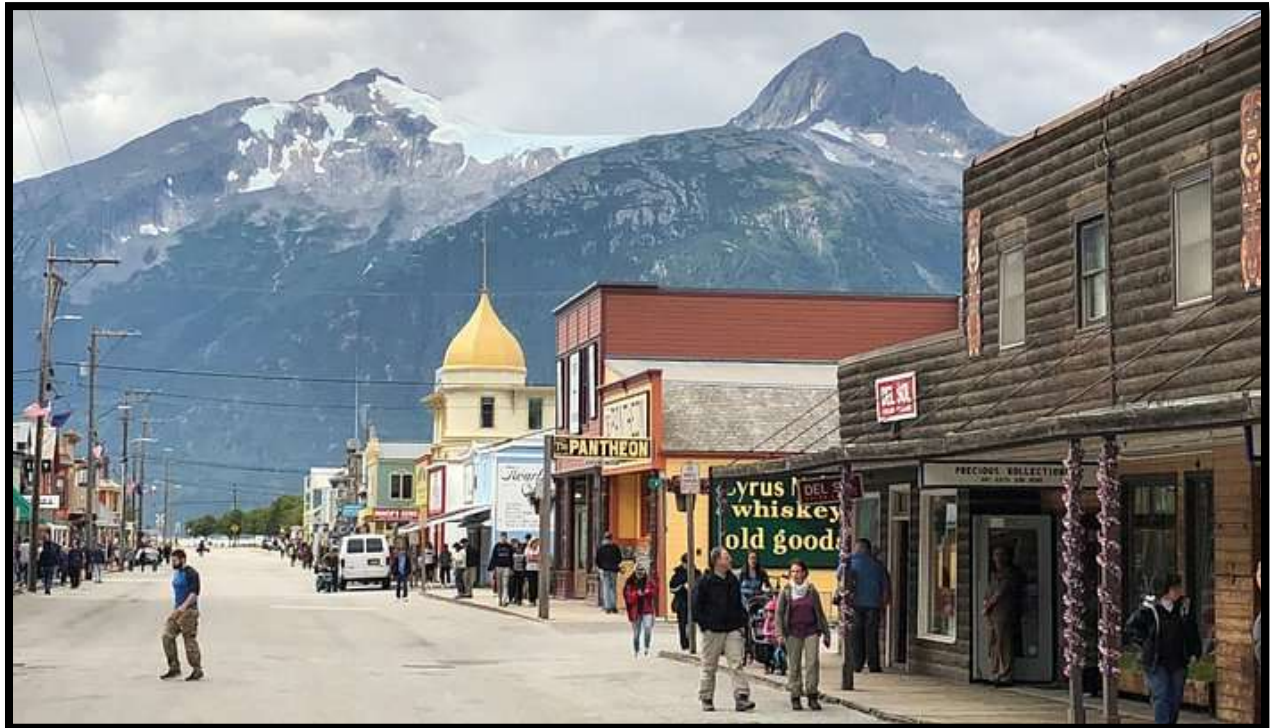
One of the most popular and beloved shore excursions in town, The Days of '98 Show has been a Skagway tradition for cruise-ship, bus, and RV visitors for over 100 years. A must-see when in Skagway.

Running just under an hour in length, you can catch one of four shows a day **at 10:30 am**, 12:30 pm, 2:30 pm, or a longer evening show that begins at 7:15 with a comedic preshow featuring games, prizes, and Robert Service poetry.

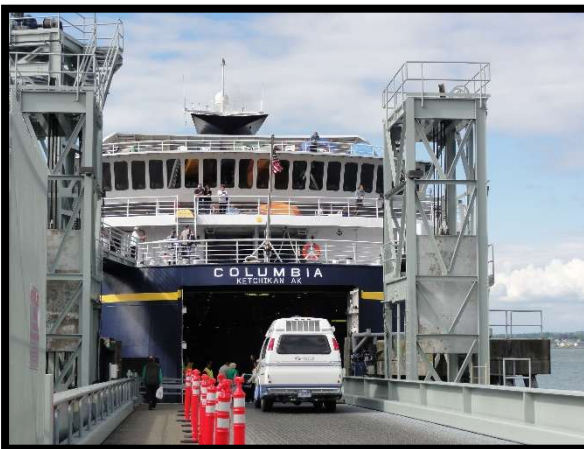


Klondike Gold Rush

National Historical Park
Alaska



Basically the whole town of Skagway is part of the Historic Park, and a simple stroll down the main street is very interesting and picturesque. We will do that, but we really need to see the 25-minute film "**Gold Fever: Race to the Klondike**" in the visitor center theater! Please stop by the Visitor Center to see what times they are available, as they change on a day-to-day basis. If there is time, there is a very interesting museum next door->> Then we **MUST** catch the Fast Ferry back to Haines, drive to the port and then take the Alaska Ferry to Juneau.



Hopefully we can find supper on the ferry, because we will arrive Juneau late (I almost said "After Dark" but that would not be possible). [* Kiana] Good night.

DAY SEVENTEEN, June 27: Juneau

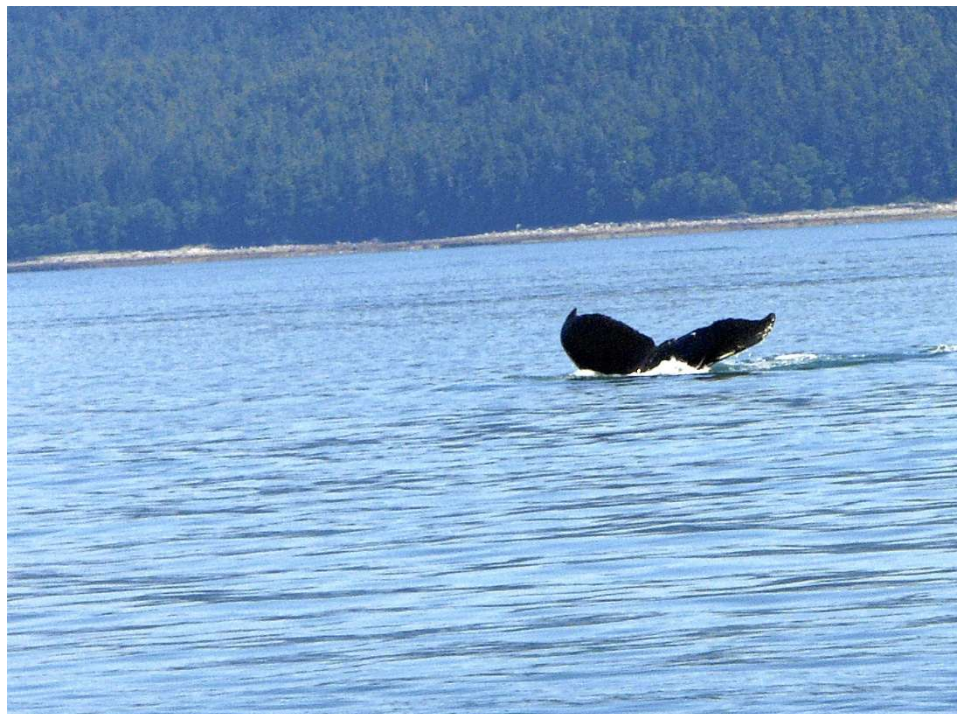
Substitution #5: Rather than take the \$30,000, 3-day Alaska Ferry to Seattle and watch for whales all the way, we will be taking a two-hour whale-watch tour here out of Juneau Harbor.

We will start today with a whale watch tour, because we will NOT be taking that long ferry trip to Seattle, and I hope it doesn't rain like last time, because the whales won't come up if it's raining. You know how they hate to get wet. There is, or was, a sign downtown with an announcement:

Juneau Rain Festival Jan. 1 – Dec. 31

And there is a good chance of rain, because we are in, believe it or not, a rain forest (more correctly, a *temperate* rain forest). The **Tongass National Forest** in Southeast Alaska is the largest U.S. National

Forest at
16.7 million acres
(26,100 sq mi;
6,800,000 ha;
68,000 km²), an
expanse larger than
10 U.S. states and
75 U.N. member
nations. Most of its
area is temperate
rain forest and is
remote enough to
be home to many
species of
endangered and
rare flora and fauna.



We will see the Mendenhall Glacier [*] from the sea, but we will get closer this afternoon.

One of the hidden gems of Juneau is the Glacier Gardens.

Glacier Gardens Rainforest Adventures in Juneau, Alaska, opened in 1998 by local entrepreneurs Steve and Cindy Bowhay, and have greeted guests from around the world who have come to admire the unique and awe-inspiring environment at Glacier Gardens. Located in the heart of the Tongass National Forest, Glacier Gardens is a vibrant Alaskan botanical garden paradise nestled in the grasp of the lush Southeast Alaskan temperate rainforest habitat. Guests will board covered rainforest adventure vehicles and embark on a guided tour through beautifully manicured gardens and into the old growth rainforest on Thunder Mountain.



Panoramic views of Juneau await 580 ft above sea level on Thunder Mountain and offer one of the best views found in the Capital City. Bald eagles frequent the property grounds and a video stream of an active bald eagle's nest is offered inside the Visitor's Center atrium. Ask WHY these "upside down trees" are here.



MAP & INFORMATION

Mendenhall Glacier

Visitor Center



Tongass National Forest

Welcome to Mendenhall Glacier

Come explore the beautiful Mendenhall, Alaska's most accessible glacier. Take time to walk the shore of Mendenhall Lake to a thundering waterfall or explore forest trails to stunning overlooks.

Mendenhall Glacier is one of 38 large glaciers that flow from the Juneau Icefield, A 1,500 square mile expanse of snow and ice. As the glacial ice accumulates seasonally, gravity pulls the ice down valleys. Slowly and steadily the glacier scours bedrock, grinding mountainsides to powder and transporting huge boulders (erratics) on its 13-mile path to Mendenhall Lake.

In this recreation area you can leave footprints on soil that was under ice just decades ago. Trail options include easy, paved pathways or challenging climbs to match any ability; one easy trail crosses a salmon stream where bears are occasionally viewed. The first Forest Service Visitor Center in the nation was dedicated here in 1962 to promote the "understanding and enjoyment of glacial phenomena" and today offers the best view of the glacier coupled with enriching exhibits and film.

Have you ever connected a whale to a glacier?

Glaciers contribute vast volumes of freshwater to land and marine environments. Southeast Alaska's glaciers alone discharge enough water to fill 40 million Olympic-sized swimming pools. By grinding mountains into fine particles, glaciers provide our oceans with a variety of nutrients including nitrogen, phosphorus and unique ancient organic carbon, all of which contribute to the productivity of marine food webs. Swimming at the top of this food web are the whales that frequent Auke Bay and the Juneau area.



Interpretive Programs

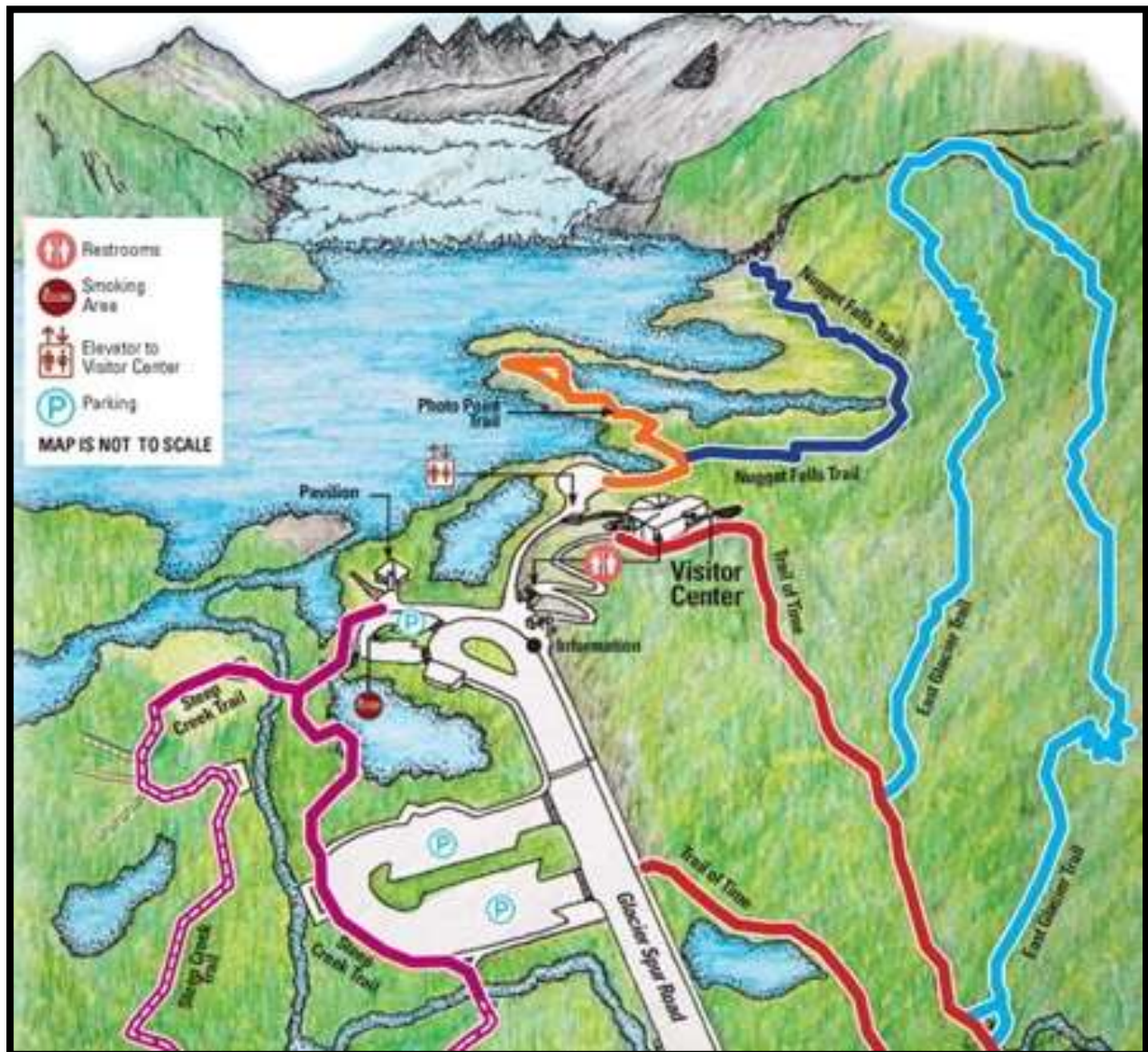
Why is it melting?

The accelerated melting of ice in modern times is a dramatic and persistent reminder of large and potentially disruptive shifts underway from our warming climate. Alaska's melting glaciers represent an up-close and personal connection to climate change. Glaciers have always provided for humans, from recreation and aesthetic beauty, to water for drinking, agriculture, and electricity. Today, they compel us to consider our connectedness with nature, the fragility of ecosystems, and the composition of the air we breathe.





Mendenhall



What's there to do at the Visitor Center?

- ▶ **WATCH** our 15 minute movie *Landscape of Change*.
- ▶ **LEARN** about the glacier, surrounding landscape, and wildlife.
- ▶ **RELAX** in the glacier observation area.
- ▶ **BROWSE** the bookstore.



Trail Information

Photo Point

Length: 1/2 mile (1.5 km) round trip
Time: Approximately 15 minutes
Difficulty: Easy; paved

Nugget Falls

Length: 2 miles (3.2 km) round trip
Time: Approximately 1.25 hours
Difficulty: Moderate; gravel

Trail of Time

Length: 1 mile (1.6 km) loop
Time: Approximately 30 minutes
Difficulty: Moderate; paved & gravel



Steep Creek

Length: 1/4 (4 km) mile loop
Time: Approximately 20 minutes
Difficulty: Easy; paved & raised boardwalk

East Glacier

Length: 2.5 mile (5.6 km) loop
Time: Approximately 2.5 hours
Difficulty: Challenging; gravel, rock, & stairs

Substitution #6: Rather than the great totem pole parks in Sitka, where the Ferry no longer stops, or in Ketchikan, where the Ferry no longer stops, we will view totems here in downtown Juneau, after our nearby dinner at Hangar on the Wharf.



A unique 4-sided totem pole. #1

Day EIGHTEEN, June 28: Ferry to the Yukon

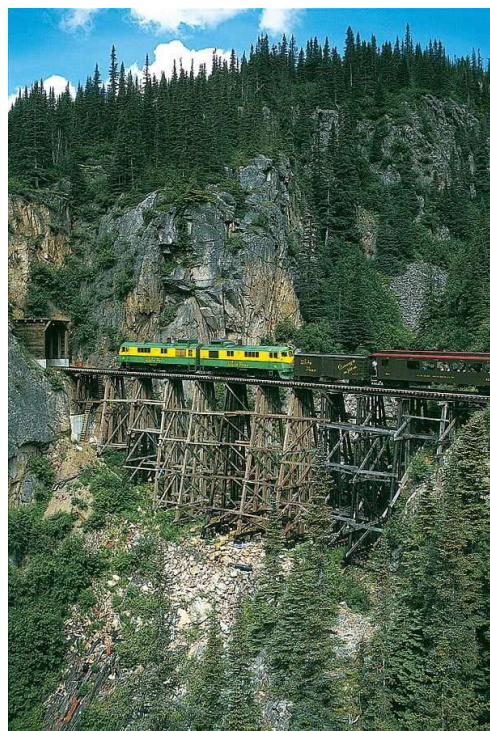
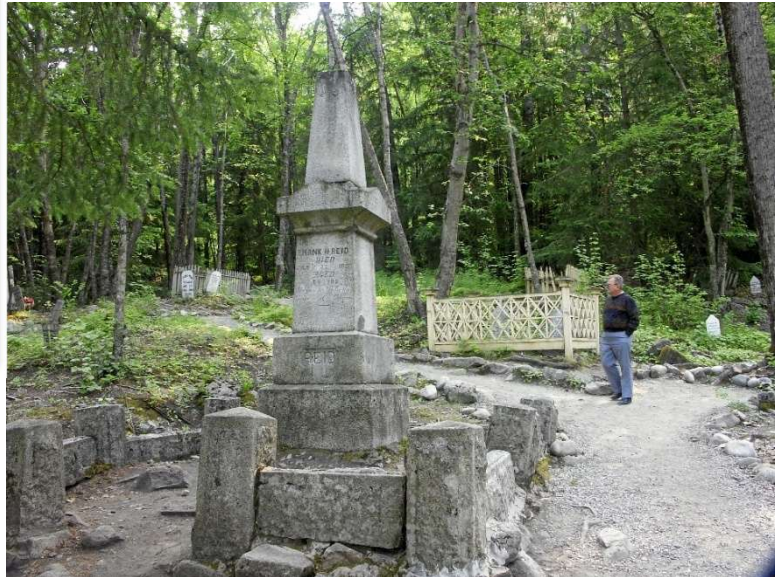


should try to find their graves. Notice the difference?

There is a short trail behind the cemetery that goes up to Reid Falls, named for guess who? We will meet you here at the cemetery. Then we will travel up the White Pass Canyon, following the route of



Despite our early departure from Juneau, we will need to have lunch on the ferry because we do not get into Skagway until about 2 PM . Then we are going to split up again. Janet and I, and anybody else interested, are going to stop at the Quilt Alaska quilt shop, while everybody else goes out to the end of town to the Gold Rush Cemetery. Hopefully in the last few days you have learned about Soapy Smith and Frank Reid, and you



the famous White Pass and Yukon Railroad, but on the other side of the canyon. You should be able to get some good pictures of it. Here is some more information about this railroad, how important it was to the Gold Rush.

The obstacles facing the builders were almost unprecedented. When Hawkins arrived he found the mountain rising defiantly, buried in snowdrifts up to 30 feet deep and studded with sheer cliffs rising for hundreds of feet. There were no surveys completed, no rolling stock and precious little material with which to begin the work. He and contractor Michael J. Heney brought in an army of men from the States together with a commissary to feed them and \$200,000 worth of supplies to equip the construction gangs.

It was quickly found that the native timber was almost worthless because it splintered too easily. As a result, every tie, every bridge timber had to be imported. Ships were hurriedly chartered and soon were discharging all types of construction materials at the Skagway terminal, including quantities of dynamite – developed just 30 years earlier – was far more effective for this purpose than the black powder used by early railroad builders. Altogether, more than 450 tons of explosives were required to push the railroad to the top of this seemingly impregnable barrier.

For the first 20 miles out of Skagway the costs of constructions averaged \$100,000 per mile, a staggering sum for that era. The first three miles along the Skagway River were relatively easy, costing just \$10,000 each, but soon the difficult section near Rocky Point (milepost 7) was encountered, driving the cost per mile up to more than \$125,000. At Porcupine Point a charge of 2,500 pounds of dynamite was detonated to blast off a huge slice of the mountainside, which fell with a deafening roar into the Skagway River below, changing its course. At Tunnel Mountain (milepost 15) workers were forced to lower themselves over a cliff on stout ropes, where there was scarcely footing for an eagle, in order to drill holes in the sheer rock and set explosive charges. A 250-foot tunnel had to be drilled here on the north side of a chasm, as the railroad ascended a grade of 3.9 percent. South of the tunnel Heney's men stood on a narrow shelf which would soon support the railroad and gazed downward to the river more than a thousand feet below. Behind them, a mile downgrade, they could see the big loop above BridalVeil Falls, where an encampment known as "White Pass City" had sprung up near the railroad. At least 35 workers were killed in construction accidents before the line was completed.

Now I don't know how many times we have gone up this (South Klondike Highway) road. We certainly paid attention to the railroad on the opposite canyon wall and marveled at the engineering that went into it, but for some reason we never noticed this bridge (perhaps because it was completed twenty years ago, in 2006, AFTER the last time we were here. Oh, good, something



new!) Past the summit and the border crossing into British Columbia, we will visit the Yukon Suspension Bridge, where you can venture out onto the bridge to get stunning views of the turbulent waters of the Tutshi River below. Learn about Gold Rush history and the natural history of the area. Walk along the boardwalk and immerse yourself in the miniature world of alpine wildflowers. Be careful. Those of us with acrophobia [*] will stay behind and take flower pictures. To quote my Mom, standing well back from the rim of the Grand Canyon at one of the many overlooks, "I can see it fine from here."

Then we cross the border into the Yukon again, probably stop for gas, and then rejoin the Alaska Highway (Alcan) back to the town of Teslin for the night. It's been a long day. Hopefully we get there in time for supper at the nearby restaurant, and even a quick view of the wildlife museum. Maybe we can even get breakfast there tomorrow, since it is another long but exciting day, in a boring sort of way.

DAY NINETEEN, June 29: Down the Cassiar

We are headed down the Cassiar Highway.

Substitution #7: Rather than take the \$30,000, 3-day Alaska Ferry to Seattle we will be driving the Cassiar Highway, and then back through Banff and Jasper and south to the US.

This is actually an alternate route to the Alcan from the Yukon back into central British Columbia, and from there you can travel down regular highways to the West Coast (Seattle for example), if that's what you would want to do. But we are taking the advice of Josh's friend Nate, a Seattle police officer (for whom I was a Webelos leader), to NOT go to Seattle during the crazy FIFA World Cup madness.

This is actually going to be something new for us. The last time we drove this Highway it was 450 miles of some hardpacked dirt, but mostly treacherous crushed rock amid a lot of construction, and only 20 miles were paved. Today I am told it is still 450 miles, but there are only 20 miles that are NOT paved. This should be much better. It is still, however, basically a wilderness road, so we will have to be very careful about gas stops, and we won't be making any stops, except for frequent wildlife calmly crossing the road. The last time we were here you could simply stop anywhere because there was so little traffic.

The only real "attraction" other than the wildlife and tremendous scenery is the Jade Store. We will probably stop here, browse around this very interesting little "trading post" and fix our own lunch.



From here it is just more driving. We have reserved campsites at [Tatogga Lake](#) (see map next page). Depending upon how the cook feels on that day and what time we arrive, we may be able to have supper there. We will probably have to have a quick breakfast tomorrow, though. We've got a lunch date and can't be late.

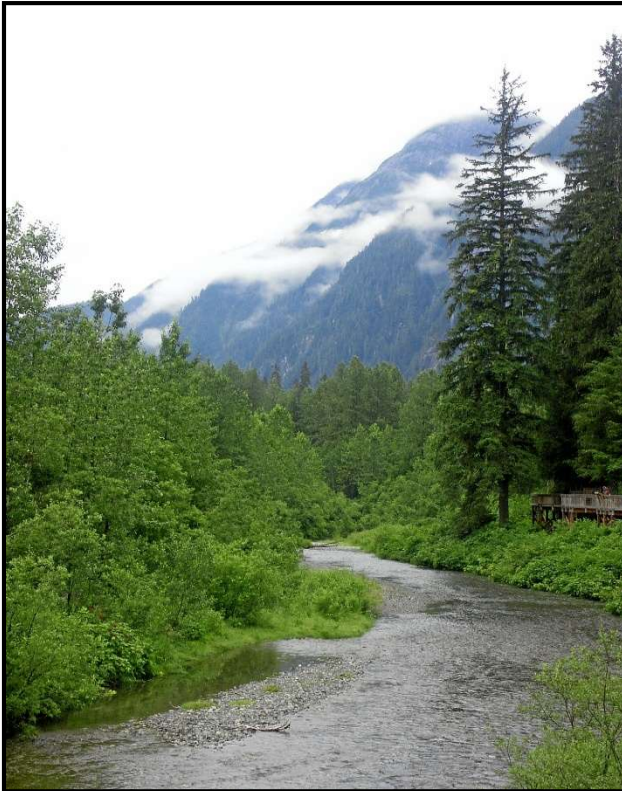


it will be interesting to see how many of the things in this picture we can actually see. What do YOU see in this picture?

DAY TWENTY, June 30: Hyder

We have three reasons today to take a little side trip off of the Cassiar Highway, and head into the little “Twin Cities” of Stewart, British Columbia and Hyder, Alaska. That’s right, we have to cross the border to get to this little postage stamp sized town in Alaska.

The first reason is the absolutely spectacular scenery (as I recall) on the way into town. I probably have some pictures somewhere. Oh, here they are:



Hyder, Alaska is one of the smallest and most unusual communities in the state — economically tied almost entirely to nearby Stewart, British Columbia, and home to only 47 residents. Hyder’s economy is almost entirely based on tourism. Small and shaped by its geography, it is the only U.S. town you can enter without U.S. border inspection.

The whole town is unique. The Second reason for going to Hyder is to visit what’s left of the “Toaster Museum,” now it has been absorbed into a small—one of very few—restaurants in Stewart. It had a large collection historical toasters, plus some coffee pots and waffle makers. It’s still there but we have to get there and have lunch before they close at 2PM.



The third reason to visit is to see the Misty Fjords National Monument. You know what a fjord is—a long, narrow and deep canyon coming inland from the sea. Norway is famous for them, but here in Alaska they are just as special and set aside as a National Monument. And because of the weather, there is often a fog or a mist hanging over the water, making some good photos, like this:



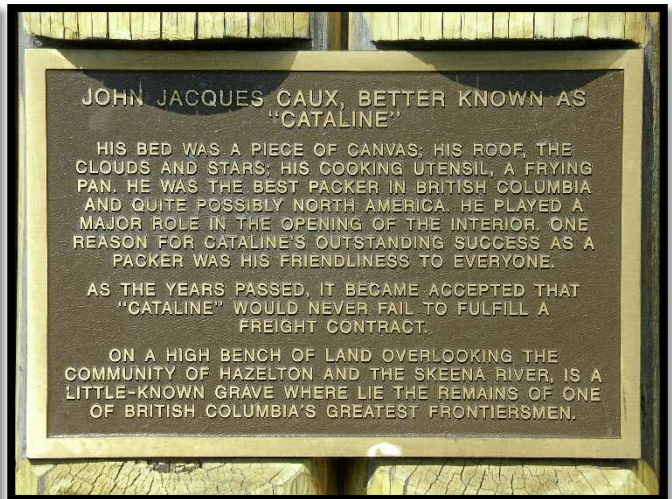
. One of the longest fjords ends here in Hyder. From here it is about 80 miles out to the Pacific Ocean.

Substitution #8: Since we cannot take the Alaska Ferry to Ketchikan and take the half-day cruise out of there to see Misty Fjords, we will drive to it here in Hyder.

Back on the road. We should reach the end of the Cassiar tonight, somewhat late.

DAY TWENTY-ONE, July 1: More Miles

Come to the end of the Cassiar, and before we turn left towards home, let's stop and look at the displays here at the corner, talking about one of the great frontiersmen of the Canadian West. It's



quite a story, and it also is quite a story about the Stikine River. You may be able to see the famous Seven Sisters mountains to your right from here, and if you TURN RIGHT here at the corner, you follow the Stikine all the way to the Pacific at the beautiful town of Prince Rupert, where the Alaska Ferry USED TO stop. We would have enjoyed the Sunken Gardens, Cow Bay (see that story below), the Totem Carving Shed, the Museum of Northern British Columbia and the Railway Museum. Oh, well, if you want to go you CAN take the BC ferry up from Vancouver. The last time we were there some folks came up just for the day, enjoying the Inside Passage.

Substitution #9: Because we are missing the Inside Passage, especially the last piece from Prince Rupert to Seattle, we'll have to make do with our Alaska Ferry ride from Juneau to Skagway. By the way, on the way to Seattle, we would have passed Friday Harbor, where my Uncle Kars lived for many years, making a living hunting rabbits. I finally met my 3 cousins, Kars' boys, when I was 69 years old. One was visiting the other who lived in Seattle, and we stopped in Idaho to see the third.

There is a commercial development in Prince Rupert, down by the wharf, and it is called "Cow Bay." The warehouses have been converted into little gift shops and restaurants, etc. for the tourists, but the interesting story is how the area got its name. It seems that the miners and lumberjacks that poured into this area (some of those served by Cataline) needed food, and there were no docks by which ships could tie up and unload these supplies. So what they would do is anchor out in the bay, and throw cows overboard. Cowboys (I suppose you would call them), would swim out or row out in small boats, lasso them and drag them to shore!

DAY TWENTY-TWO, July 2: Back Up and Over

We've now been on the road three weeks. We've never been out this long before, and I'm guessing neither have you. Hang in there. Plenty more to see even though most of today will be retracing our steps through Jasper and Banff National Parks, and staying at the same campground as we did before. We don't want to miss anything on the way back, but we are basically "headed for the barn," and anybody familiar with farm and horses [*] [*Grand Canyon] can explain what that means. Before that, we will make a brief stop at Mount Robson Provincial Park and admire one more of the great Canadian Rockies viewpoints.

[Mount Robson](#)



DAY TWENTY-THREE, July 3: Almost Home :-)

Today, after lunch, we will cross the Montana border from Canada (supposedly a very strict border crossing). We will try to sneak past the town of Calgary, and hopefully not get caught up in the traffic of the Calgary Stampede, "The Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth," which starts today.



Almost Home!

We had spent almost 3 weeks on our trip to Alaska, fulfilling Dad's lifelong dream of driving up the Alcan Highway. Remember that three weeks of vacation was twenty-three days, the longest we have ever been away from home and we were all very definitely feeling "headed for the barn." Mom was never the traveler that Dad was, so it was a bit of a surprise when she, usually quite calm, reserved and quiet, got all excited when we crossed the border into the United States at Sweetgrass, Montana, saying, "We're almost home!" I don't know if it was the kindest thing to do, or not, and I do think we waited a little while and let her enjoy it before telling her that home was still 1200 miles and two days away. (Longer for us, we still have things to see.)

DAY TWENTY-FOUR, July 4: Great Falls

Some day it would be really fun to just trace the whole Lewis and Clark expedition from St. Louis out to the Pacific Coast. You saw the first winter at the start of this trip, at Fort Mandan, and here you are further up the Missouri River at Great Falls. When you have time, you should try to see the other parks and sites that we have seen along the Lewis and Clark Trail, including Pompey's Pillar, Lolo Pass, Three Rivers, Fort Clatsop, Upper Missouri River Breaks, Columbia River Gorge and Multnomah Falls, and the National Frontier Trails Museum in St. Louis

Re-live the 1804-06 Lewis and Clark Expedition's 8,000-mile journey across western North America in the comfort of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center. Built into a scenic bluff with spectacular views of the Missouri River, the Center's exhibits and ranger programs bring alive the indomitable spirit of exploration.

Start your indoor journey with one of two introductory videos in the 158-seat theater.

The self-guided exhibit hall's centerpiece is the two-story diorama of the portage of the Missouri River's five great falls. Test your strength pulling a boat [[*Pompeys](#)] against the Missouri's current.

The Interpretive Center chronicles the journey of Lewis and Clark, as well as the important experiences with Plains and Northwest Indians. Learn details of the plants and animals that expedition members documented. Feel the Expedition's disappointment at the impossibility of a Northwest Passage water route.

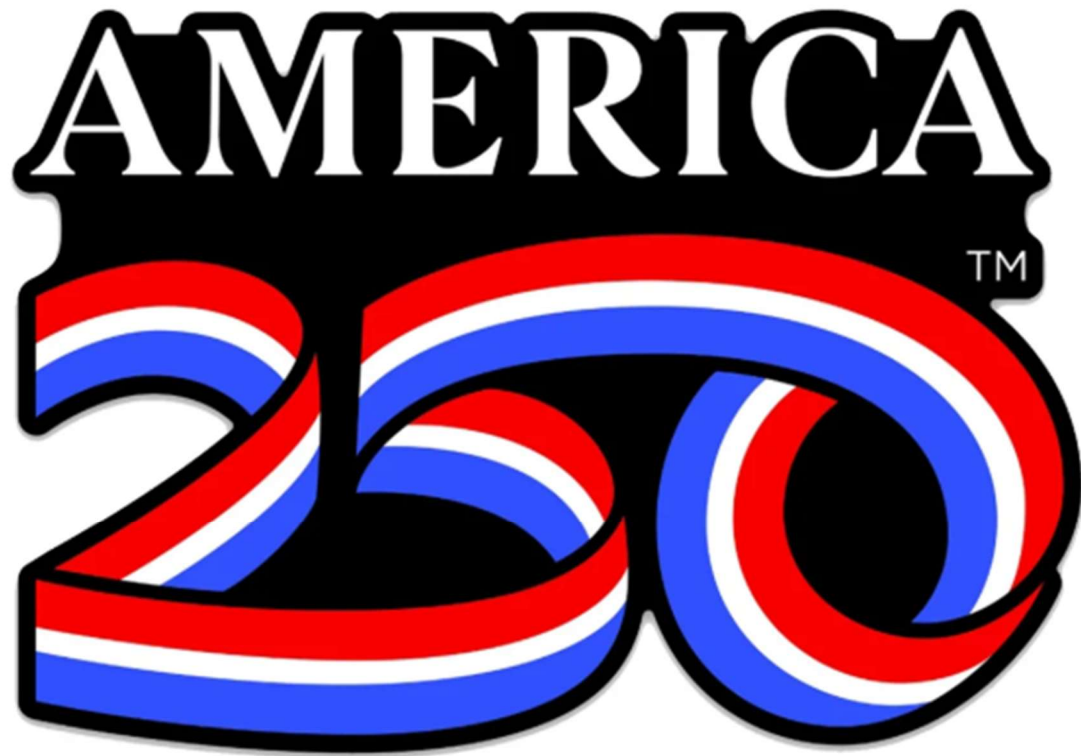
Before we have lunch and leave town, I want to visit the Giant Springs State Park, and challenge each of you kids to hike the entire length of the river!





Giant Springs State Park

Tonight we will be celebrating the Fourth of July and the 250th Anniversary of the United States! This is SPECIAL! I remember we were around for the 200th anniversary (the Bicentennial), and it was special because it was the first time in over 100 years that the city of Vicksburg, Mississippi celebrated the Fourth of July. (You might look up why.) [*] Unfortunately we will be in the tiny town (pop. 374) of Jordan, Montana that night (no fireworks). We're working on a way to at least watch some of the celebration around the country. And I have a gift for each of you.



DAY TWENTY-FIVE, July 5: On to Medora

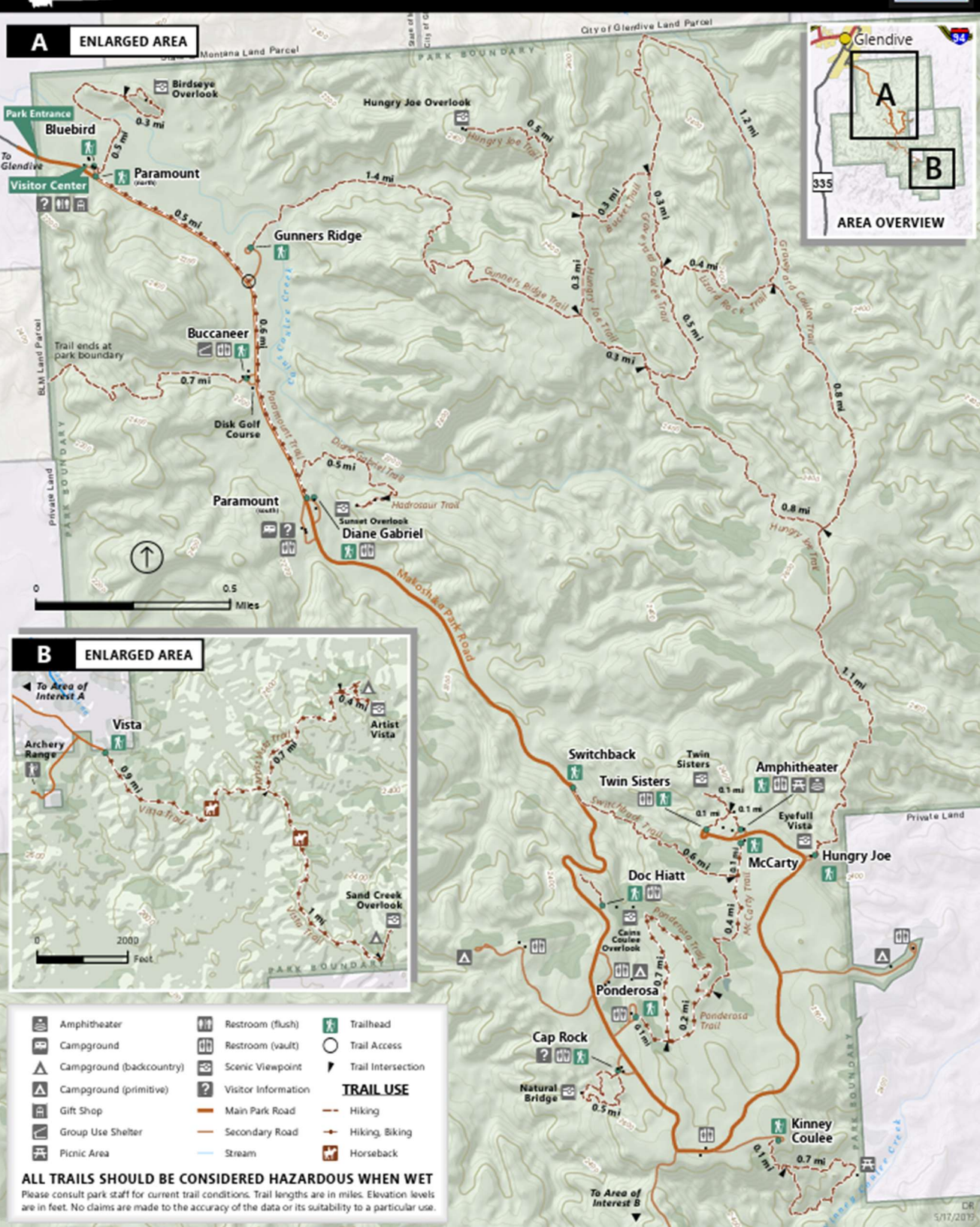
Today, as Montana's largest state park, the badlands of Makoshika are set aside for visitors to see and enjoy. In addition to the pine and juniper studded badland formations, the park also houses many fossil remains.



Our visitor center (with a gift shop) at the park entrance, houses a Triceratops and Tyrannosaurus Rex fossil along with other fossil remains and badland interpretive displays. Find out more about Montana paleontology exhibits and activities at [Montana Dinosaur Trail](#).

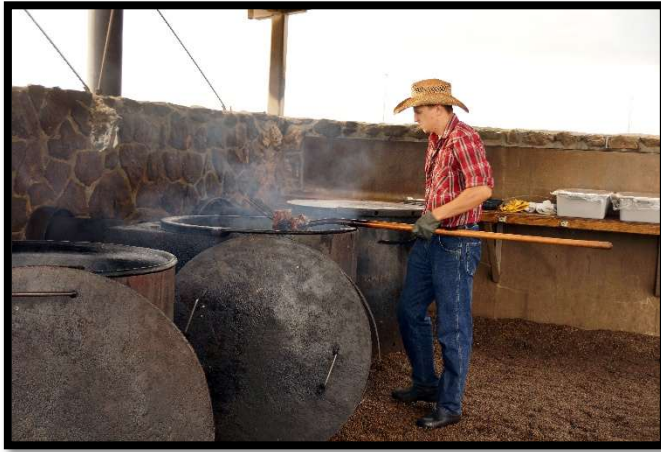
Included within the park are scenic drives, [hiking trails](#), 28 camping sites, a group picnic area, and an outdoor amphitheater.

The park offers special events throughout the year, including Montana Shakespeare in the Park, Friday night campfire programs and youth programs in summer, and the famous Buzzard Day festival, the second Saturday in June, featuring 10k & 5k races, a fun run, jumping house, food, disc golf tournament, hikes and more!



Pitchfork Steak Fondue

A Badlands Barbecue



A one-of-a-kind experience, where we take 12 oz steaks, cooked to medium-well perfection, and give them a western-style fondue twist!

Witness our cowboy chefs expertly load New York Strip steaks onto pitchforks, then dunk them in barrels of oil. But that's not all! Satisfy your cowboy cravings at the barbecue-style buffet with all your favorite fixin's: baked beans, baked potatoes, garlic toast, coleslaw, vegetables, fresh fruit salad, brownies, cinnamon-sugar donuts,

lemonade, and coffee.

Once you've grabbed your plate, settle down with your loved ones, and relish the moment with live music playing in the background. Take in the breathtaking view of the Badlands or engage in some fun-filled yard games with your family.

Medora Musical

The greatest Show in the West

A little history. A little humor. A whole lot of Western spirit. Experience the ultimate Country Western Music Revue in Medora, ND! This live outdoor spectacle showcases a variety of music favorites – from Dolly to disco.

It's good old-fashioned family fun with thrilling variety acts, live horses on stage, a firework finale, and new twists each summer. All while celebrating the history of Medora, Teddy Roosevelt, and the historic American West.



DAY TWENTY-SIX, July 6: All about Teddy

Today we will take a tour through Theodore Roosevelt National Park, one of our favorites. It's a



place TR loved; he had a cabin here that is still preserved, and he was an investor, if I recall correctly, in a local cattle ranch. (The real entrepreneur here was the Marquis de Morey, whose Chateau sits on the hill above town. He pioneered the idea of shipping refrigerated beef (before Thermo King!) by rail. [*]

The big attraction for us is the wildlife, and in particular a sizable herd of buffalo, officially known as American Bison but I like

“Buffalo” better. They’re American, by golly, and we’ll call ‘em what we please! We hopefully find the truth of the old song:

"You Can't Roller Skate in A Buffalo Herd"

Ya can't roller skate in a buffalo herd
Ya can't roller skate in a buffalo herd
Ya can't roller skate in a buffalo herd
But you can be happy if you've a mind to

Ya can't take a shower in a parakeet cage
Ya can't take a shower in a parakeet cage
Ya can't take a shower in a parakeet cage
But you can be happy if you've a mind to

All ya gotta do is put your mind to it
Knuckle down, buckle down, do it, do it, do it

AND FIVE MORE VERSES

Right??? You can be happy if you’ve a mind to!

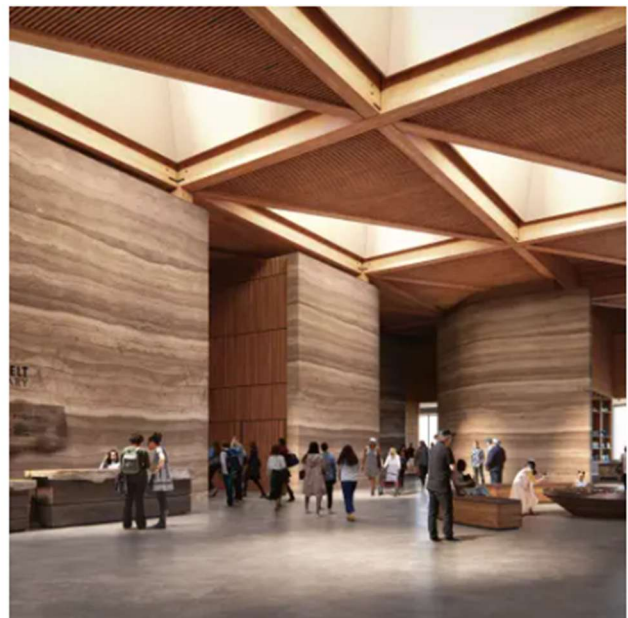
We'll only go as far down the Park Road as time allows. Then we have 10AM reservations at...



The newly-opened (yesterday) Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library.

The Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library is not a traditional museum. It's an immersive journey into Roosevelt's life and legacy—and an invitation to consider your own role in the arena.

Your visit moves through **Narrative Galleries** (the chapters of Roosevelt's story) and **Adventure Galleries** (hands-on, interactive experiences that connect his challenges to today).



Then it's time to move on. Next stop, (after lunch) the Enchanted Highway.

The Story Behind the Enchanted Highway

What are these metal sculptures doing out here anyway? It's a combination of effort to save a small town called Regent, artistry, and a bit of luck.

Back in the 1980s, North Dakota's smaller rural towns were slowly becoming extinct. Gary Greff was becoming increasingly concerned that his beloved town of Regent, North Dakota is the next to go. The knee-jerk reaction to this is to wait for a big company to come in and create jobs for small-town residents.



But at the time, their population was less than 200, there wasn't a railroad, and their infrastructure just wasn't up to par. Greff thought that if someone is to save their town, looking outside won't do it. In 1989, the road from their town to Interstate 94 was paved, and Greff picked up a newspaper and read about a local farmer that built a sculpture of a man holding a bale of hay, and people are driving up to see the sculpture and take pictures of it.

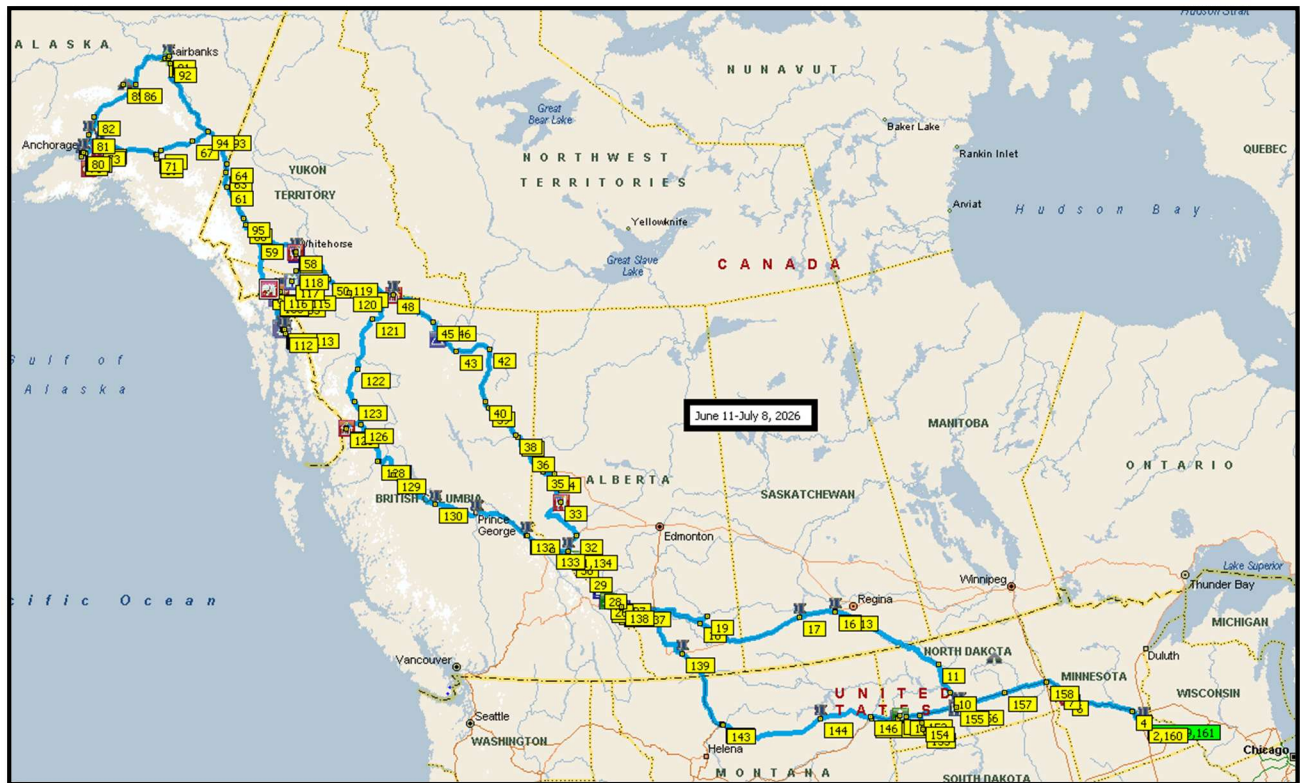
It inspired him to build huge metal sculptures to inspire people on I-94 to drive south and go through their town, which they'll be able to do smoothly now that the road to Regent has been paved.

Greff built the first sculpture in 1989, and he's built six additional sculptures since. Two others are currently under construction. His master plan is to create a total of 10 sculptures, as well as more amenities for the convenience of visitors coming through. ***Try to find them all!***

This massive project has been a success, attracting more than 224,000 visitors to the sculptures since the first sculpture went up. North Dakota is now known as the Mount Rushmore for metal art.

DAY TWENTY-SEVEN, July 7: Home!

This day will end a trip as it began, trying to make a lot of miles on the way home. A brief stop in Jamestown to see the world's largest buffalo, and the white buffalo if he's still there, and then pedal to the medal. Here's what you did.



Today's theme song, "On the Road Again" by Willie Nelson.

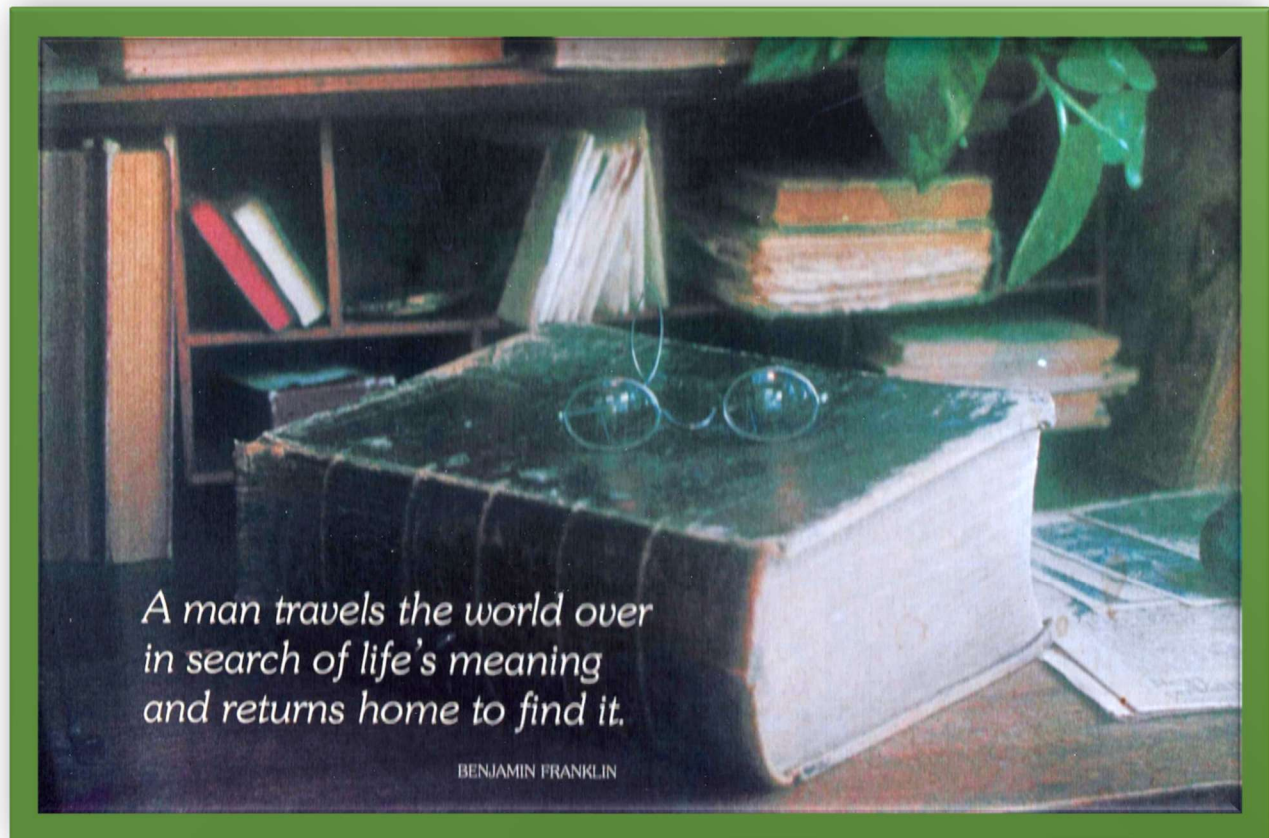
*On the road again
Just can't wait to get on the road again
The life I love is makin' music with my friends
And I can't wait to get on the road again*

*On the road again
Goin' places that I've never been
Seein' things that I may never see again
And I can't wait to get on the road again*

*On the road again
Like a band of gypsies, we go down the highway
We're the best of friends
Insisting that the world be turnin' our way
And our way is on the road again
And I can't wait to get on the road again*

Epilogue

Every time I go, I come back to this.



Some people substitute the word “happiness” for “life’s meaning” but either and both are true. There is a joy and happiness in travelling; I really hope you found it. But there is a joy, too, in being home, in being “back to normal.” Remember that, wherever you are, if you’re not having fun, you’re doing it wrong! NOW you can rest, reflect, maybe write an actual story of your travels as I usually do. And above all, treasure the good memories (delete those that are not) and hold on to the good pictures that remind you of those memories (and delete those that are not).

You will never be able to take this exact same trip again, so you will have to, at some point, pick somewhere else to go, as we have—all 50 States (along with Josh and Janelle), every State capitol, every Province of Canada and every Provincial capitol, all 63 National Parks, and 35 other countries. Or maybe just stay home. It is a beautiful world, wherever you are. Be at peace with God, and be Happy.