

Second Update from our Alaska Cruise 2019

Gary and Bev Campbell

MV "Raven"

*Raven* and *Finally* spent 4 days in Sitka, Alaska taking in the sights and tastes. We toured the Russian cemetery and fortress, read the history of Sitka at Totem Park, watched a live show of Russian dancing, toured the very interesting and palatial Russian Orthodox Bishop's house built by Finnish shipwrights, and then the Raptor Centre with all its birds of prey up close.



1 Bev and Gary Campbell at Sitka, west of Baranof Island

One of two anchorages back toward Chatham Channel was Tenakee Springs. Walking through town felt like going back to the 40's with narrow dirt roads, jerry rigged electrical and water systems, old classic general store and more hot springs which had nude times posted for men and for women.

On the way out to Chatham Channel the Vrooms caught a halibut.



2 Penny and Paul Vroom at Warm Springs, Baranof Island

They had decided to go into Auke, a suburb of Juneau, to get some parts. It was just as well because a forecast announced a Sou'easter coming in for three days. This would give us time for more land touring. On the way we passed a pod of 7-8 Orcas.

We rented a car at the Juneau airport for a couple of days. This allowed us to do our laundry while having dinner upstairs, go to Costco and Fred Meyers for groceries, then off to the fishing store. Next day we drove to the Mendenhall Glacier where we toured a museum on the glacier, and lunched in downtown Juneau amid the cruise ship hubbub.

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3 Vrooms and Campbells at Mendenhall glacier, Juneau

Then we headed up the Lynn Canal with the ultimate destination of Skagway near the gold rush Chilkoot Trail. We found an anchorage along the way that was not too deep but with the extreme tide we felt the 21 ft tide come in the middle of the night. Getting up to Haines was a bit lumpy with 3-5 ft waves with only a 10-knot wind. But wind was against tide, and water coming from another inlet wreaked havoc.

We remained in Haines for a couple days enjoying the amazing Hammer Museum with thousands of various hammers. Who would have thought such a museum would be interesting, but it was! The Haines Sheldon Museum presented a nationally accredited collection of Native and local art, Gold Rush mementos and Jack Dalton stories. Well done! Haines has many historic homes, brothels, hotels, and has been used for movie settings such as "White Fang".

As the Gold Rush was winding down in 1901 a US-Canadian border dispute prompted the US to build the large Fort Seward at Haines to establish a presence in SE Alaska. After the WWII some veterans bought the

fort, and today the buildings are used as hotels, restaurants, shops, Indian arts and the Alaskan Chilkat Centre for the Arts.

We enjoyed Haine's coffee shops and breweries. And after talking with the locals on the dock we heard that the winds blowing up the narrow, steep sided channels to Skagway were very strong and we were advised to take the ferry or rent a car to drive the 350 miles to Skagway. Since we had all been to Skagway by cruise ship, we decided to make our way round to Glacier Bay instead.

After a couple of days, we arrived in Hoonah. On the way we had had staticky radio contact with the ranger station in Glacier Bay (their phones & Wi-Fi were down) trying to get a last-minute reservation in Glacier Bay. We were only successful in letting them know we would call again in a day. This gave us time to go to Hoonah to get fuel, groceries, do laundry, go to the brewery and a local restaurant. No time to do North America's longest zip Line!

Next morning, we headed toward Glacier Bay with the intention of calling them again when we had better radio reception. Lo and behold both our boats got 7 day permits to enter! We were just early enough to miss the busy summer season. The regulations for entering are stringent and they were read to us we entered. The number of boats is limited and where and how you cruise is controlled. We were required to moor at Bartlett Cove to take an orientation to ensure we followed the regulations.

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We spent a day there as the Parks Service also offer optional presentations, videos and hikes that are very informative. Glacier Bay Lodge had a wildlife exhibit, movie theatre with professional videos on Glacier Bay, lounge with a huge stone fireplace and a restaurant where we had a great breakfast. Down the path is a Tlingit tribal house where we attended a presentation by a Tlingit ranger who described the history of the local Tlingit and talked about the meaning of their totem poles in front of the long house. The stories are fascinating and are an article in themselves.

The following day we headed north. We immediately started seeing humpbacks in the whale area. And lots of sea otter and porpoise. Further along we came across Marble Island that had areas mounded with sea lions. Flying around the cliffs were hundreds of gulls and kittiwakes. In the water were cormorants and puffins. We must have spent an hour there taking photographs. After a busy day we were glad to anchor in the quiet North Sandy Cove.

Next was Reid Inlet where we had the company of a grizzly foraging on shore. We took our dinghy to get an up-close look at the Reid glacier. A couple of fellows from Tofino on their boat decided to hike on the shore to the glacier but quickly turned back when they saw all the fresh bear scat. Later a couple kayaked in to set up camp where we previously saw the grizzly. We found out three days later that the bear had destroyed their tent when they were away hiking.

The following day was long but exciting as we cruised to the most northern channels in Glacier Bay to see Marjerie and Grand Pacific glaciers.



4 Bev Campbell on Raven at Marjerie glacier, Glacier Bay; Finally in background.

Marjerie is the one that actively calves into the sea. And Lamplugh glacier presented its bluest colours to us. We came away with glacier ice for cocktails later.



5 Raven in front of Marjerie glacier, Glacier Bay

After a couple of more days of whale and porpoise sightings we were back in Bartlett Cove where we went to yet another presentation at the Tribal House. We met

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up with Kirk and Sue Sundby who were meeting with some family there. And as we were cruising out of Glacier Bay we crossed paths with Bob and Lois Stevenson with another boat from Comox.

We are now back at Hoonah planning the next leg of our trip. At this point we are splitting off from the Vrooms as they remain fishing along the Baranof Island coast, and we will start heading toward Petersburg. New adventures yet to come.

*Bev and Gary*