

The Overloader's News

Our Trip to Alaska

By Deb Fair

June 24, 2011

June 15

We left home on June 15 and spent 3 days in the Rapid City, SD area and had fun. Attended the same Chuck Wagon dinner place we did with our girls back in 1978. Of course they have updated the place and added activities there but the menu and show were similar and that was fun. My computer did this funky thing the last day we were at the campground there and appeared to crash. Stopped in Buffalo, WY, town of 4,500, the next morning and the campground directed us to help. This lady was the greatest and said no crash had occurred and has us on our way with our fixed computer and refused to charge us anything as she just wanted to be helpful to travelers on their way to Alaska. Counted it as her good deed for the day. We have been here in the Yellowstone area for 4 days. We are camped in Montana just 18 miles from Yellowstone on the Yellowstone River and have been all over Yellowstone Park and Teton National Park. Those Golden Ages passes are great for this sort of thing, FREE admission! Today we went on a scenic drive and went up to the top of the snow capped mountains as we wove our way up to the top of Beartooth pass. Elevation was just over 10,000'. They now have it open and roads are clear and dry and snow is piled up high. Took Bob's picture and he is 5'9" and the cleared snow at the edge of the road was higher than him and that was not the stuff that got blowed out of the road. You cannot believe the size of the snow plows. The plow part was as tall as him and the tires almost that high with chains on them. Skier's

were having a ball and of course the chair lift was busy. Many motorcycles on that road as were people on bikes riding up those step trails. Have seen 2 grizzly bears and 8 black bears so far. Antelope and Elk.



Deb & Bob Fair

There are so many bison you cannot believe and of course they amble along and they have the right of way. Have never seen so many RV rental units before. Class C's from 3 different companies. Leaving for Idaho tomorrow to meet up with our Alaska group on Sunday and are going in a couple of days early so we can finally hit a Wall-Mart (I am having withdrawal Systems), get pictures developed, etc. Will spend 2 days getting there as we are unable to go to Glacier National Park as planned. They have only been able to open up 13 miles of the park entrances and figure it will be July 4th until it will all be opened up. Take care.

July 10

We are now at Watson Lake, the Yukon and posted our Michigan Overloaders sign in the Sign Post Forest today. Took pictures. We saw 2 black bears along side the road

today and those pesky bison herds are everywhere and of course traffic stops for them as they have the right away. Also some mustangs. Still waiting to see a moose. Take care & we'll keep you posted.

July 30

Went for a dog sledding ride the other day. It was at an Iditarod training camp and the sleds are on wheels. Went for a 2 mile run and the dogs could not wait to go. It was 70 degrees and for the dogs that was hot. We saw a short movie on the big race and how they prep the dogs and drivers for training and racing. Then we got to play with 3 week old puppies. I told Bob I wanted one so he took my picture with one and said, "There you go."

We went to an Interpretive center yesterday and amazing the differences between the tribes, regions, and customs. The beautiful fur clothing they wear for survival is amazing. We saw some native dances and homes. Some regions have no wood so they do not cook their food. They either sun dry it or eat it raw.

We have taken some day cruises and the glaciers are unbelievable. They come down to the waters edge as they sit on the mountains and are always in motion. You hear the creaking and groaning of movement. And then you will hear this crashing sound and it is too late. The glacier has already "calved" and entered the water. Try to get that on film. Just

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waiting for some movement before you hear the sound.

The seals, whales, porpoises are incredible as are the moose, bears, and eagles.

We got a deal on diesel fuel the other day for \$4.29 a gallon but have paid as much as \$5.54 in Canada, or \$1.59 a liter. With the Alaskan pipe line providing 1/3 of the fuel for this country you would think it would be cheaper.



Alaskan King Crabs

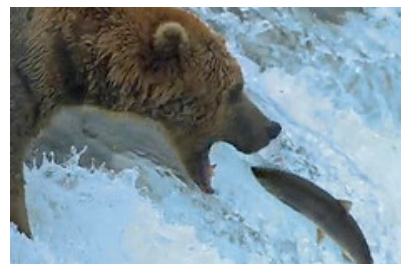
Alaskan King Crab runs \$24.99 a pound and salmon and halibut are high. Bob took a fishing charter in Homer last week and even with the cost of the charter and \$20 day fishing license the cost per pound of halibut was still considerably less. My freezer is full of fish. You would think that a place where they bring the fish in would be reasonable but it is not. Bob got salmon and Cole slaw and I got halibut and French fries the other day in this little nothing chips and fish place and he got a beer and me a diet coke and it was \$46! Bob reminded me it was cheaper to fill the tank on the car than that meal. I had to agree. Going to Denali for 3 days tomorrow.

August 20

This is a trip everyone should take. It is an incredible journey and as Shirley has said, "pictures are only a small part of the story". Denali was incredible. We took an all day bus trip into Denali. Cars can only travel a short way into the park. Amazing sights. We saw a grizzly bear ahead of us so the bus stopped. The bear then walked all the way around the bus and then ambled off. We all got great pictures and what an experience. As we were returning we saw a mother bear with her twins cubs that were about 2 years old and the babies were playing together and rolling down the hill. We laughed so hard as mom sat like a Buddha and scratched her belly as she watched them. The mountains and lakes are incredible colors and shapes. Another day we went white water rafting and that was lots of fun even though it was cold and windy. The dry suits we were given protected us well.

Fairbanks, we saw an ice sculptor and some of the winning sculptures from this last March's yearly contest. Amazing what they can do with a chunk of ice. Have had some wonderful meals and I do like halibut and Bob is enjoying salmon. We also took a cruise and investigated the oil pipeline, and panned for gold. We also took a free day and drove up the Dalton Highway (Ice Road Truckers) to the Arctic Circle. We went into Coldfoot which is often mentioned and it has a population of 12. They have a small post office, 1 pump of gas and 1 pump of diesel, a cafe, and saloon. Interesting place. While in Haines we visited the Bald Eagle Foundation and saw lots of eagles on the entire trip and then drove to the docks and loaded all our RV's and cars on a big boat and cruised up to Skagway for a few days. Great shopping there as it is a stop for the cruise ships. Took this fast catamaran

ride to Juneau and saw these incredible whales and seals and sea lions along the way. We also took a train ride on the White Pass Railway and that was fun. Lots of shows along the way with meals.



Salmon fishing

We have been down where the salmon are now running watching for bears and have seen lots of salmon but not many bears there. Today as we proceeded to Fort Telkwa, British Columbia we saw some wonderful glaciers and ice fields. There is fresh snow up in the top of the mountains and the fall colors are definitely there. As we continued on our route we saw a mother black bear and her two yearly cubs munching on berries along side the road and a male further on down the road. We should be back in the states next week.

September 10

Well, we are on the last leg of our trip and should arrive home in a few days. What an adventure we have had and we would recommend it to anyone.

After leaving Skagway we headed for the lower 48 through Teslin in the Yukon and Watson Lake. The Cassier Highway would be the route we would take with the caravan home. On our way to Iskut, British Columbia we had a scheduled stop

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at Jade City. They have one of the largest jade mines in the world. They also had this wonderful gift shop. They told us about the mining of jade and then we ladies took over with shopping. It would be one of the last good gift shops we would come across on the way home. We ladies took our time not wanting to miss anything. We spent the next two nights in Stewart (Canada) and drove our cars over to Hyder in the states each evening. The last time we would enter and exit Alaska. The Salomon were just thick in the shallow rivers there and there is a viewing area to watch the bears. One couple noted on their trip there that a mother bear and she was teaching her 2 cubs how to fish in one area while in another area a male grabbed a fish and while he was busy eating it a wolf sneaked down to the water and got one for himself. What a sight. We continued working our way South through Fort Telkwa and Prince George and all of a sudden the scenery changed from green to brown and desert. We soon arrived at our nightly destination. A dude ranch called Hat Creek Ranch. What fun. We had a tour of the town and took a stage coach ride too. After traveling for 2 days it was a nice break. The next day we made a stop at Hell's gate on the way to Rosedale. You take a tram to the bottom of this gorge with a river and suspension bridge. The river runs really fast with rapids and whirlpools. Nice views and shops. Good place for lunch, and postcards. The next morning we all car pooled to Minter Gardens. They were gorgeous. I have never seen such large plants as I have on this trip. That evening we arrived in Anacortes, WA. This is where our caravan ended after 2 days there. We made such good friends that it was hard to say goodbye.

Bob and I stayed in the area 2 more days. We took a car ferry (30 minute ride) over to Port Orchard as a favorite author of mine bases her book series on it, however in the book it is called Cedar Cove. While there we took the foot ferry for the 10 minute ride across the bay to Bremerton. We walked around the docks and saw lots of sailors and toured the Navy Museum. I knew from the look in Bob's eyes that we would make a fast trip through Washington and Oregon for sure. His ship was now on his mind. We moved right on through Washington and Oregon stopping only to spend some time in Northern California to enjoy the giant redwood trees. Amazing. The fishing campground we stayed at in this area had beautiful views and the size of salmon these fishermen were catching was unreal. On to Vacaville for 3 days. We took the car and the first day we went to the Oakland area to visit Bob's museum ship the Hornet. An aircraft carrier he served on for 2 years.



USS Hornet

He was the 1st one to board that morning and when they saw his hat said "**USS HORNET CVS-12**" on it they asked if he had served on her. He said yes and what would have been a 2 - 3 hour tour lasted all day as they rolled out the red carpet for him. It was fun just watching him enjoying himself so much. About 5 volunteers and the 30 year veteran and head for this restoration project

made sure he saw more than the average tourist. The next day was my day and we headed for San Jose to see Mrs. Winchester's Mystery House. Amazing home. I enjoyed my day but I was just your average tourist so did not get the extra attention that Bob had gotten the day before! The last day we drove into San Francisco to Pier 39. We took a tour of the city and another one out to the Golden Gate bridge. Another good day.

We left the San Francisco area and headed for Salt Lake City. Took a shuttle bus into town and visited Temple Square. Our tour guide was a 19 year old girl from Kalamazoo, Michigan! Those building are amazing. We are now heading home. Will spend Sunday night with good friends we made on the caravan who live in Iowa and then home. Time to get ready to leave for the Fall Rally in a week. I hope Shirley brings her pictures of Canada and Alaska as mine will not be ready. I have several hundred to go through and will take awhile to do. I have stories though, just as Shirley will have. But until you see it for yourself----

DEB

PS - Would we take another caravan? You betcha! We have signed up for a 48 day caravan to the Canadian



Maritime Provinces in 2014. Have locked in this years price. Anyone else want to go?