

# adventure

# ALASKA

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## Another Year, But not the same . . .

Each one is of course different, and at the beginning, one doesn't know just how until it draws to a close. This one for us as for so many, will remain colored by images and motivations unfathomable. While perspectives have changed in ways yet to be digested, what was before September 11 wasn't without joy and depth, and what follows won't be either. Rhythms may be different, but when we look backward and at all that is meaningful, we're left with no less appreciation and excitement for the future.

Ours is a business that includes many moments of reward, from the individual epiphanies of guests during a trip, to the thoughtful words of past clients long after their visit. The summer season is so full of all the little memories that make up that heightened sense of living that is the best of travel. It's that, "I can't believe we've only been here a week" observation that makes it all worthwhile. While it may be home for some of us, it's the visitor's enthusiasm that keeps it new and wonderful for all of us. For those of you that have joined us this season or in the past, we thank you for choosing our small company. We feel privileged to do what we do.

This past summer was for us, a very good one. Some of you may recall that last year we made an organizational decision not to grow any larger as a company. It is and still feels like a family, and we're still able to connect with each of our guests. It is that atmosphere that we very intentionally wish to retain. After deciding to limit the number of trips offered to that end, the economy fell nicely in step and helped do that for us. Visitation to Alaska was down



*A Warm Moment on the Denali Highway*



*Dwarfed by Alaska*

considerably overall, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. With ever larger boats, buses and hotels, the drive to satisfy shareholders and increase the number of visitors to the state has been incredible, with fears of an end result tending toward a travel experience homogenized and indistinguishable from anywhere else. We're not-so-secretly hoping that unfulfilled projections for the big cruise companies might dampen a bit of their enthusiasm for monstrous new developments . . .

Next year is of course a big question mark for everyone, and folks at the moment are understandably not thinking leisure travel thoughts. The economy is always a factor but for Alaska it may well all even out though, with hesitation about travel abroad bringing more interest in domestic travel north. We'll see! We're in it for the long haul (12 years now ---gasp!) and the mountains promise to remain magnificent . . .

## Old News New News

Our past summer was remarkable for its lack of anything noteworthy, in the, "Gee, I hope that never happens again" category. The weather and things mechanical all for the most part, cooperated to the extent expected. And that's as much as we dare hope for. Too much sun or too many views of Denali, and one would start wondering if there was some payback in the offing. For those of you who helped keep it even and appeased the weather gods with days of inclemency, the rest of us thank you, very much.

As for the future, plans are to keep the same itinerar-

ies, style and mayhem. Inertia is underrated.

One item of note though, is that after years of pondering just why we were lucky to have such excellent staff, and wondering how we could hope to maintain that enviable situation, we've come up with a plan. We've decided to start an in-house employee breeding program. Yup, that's right, start'em from scratch and groom'em all the way. Given the lag time of this bold new strategy, we've already begun implementation. Barbra is pregnant and so is Joe's wife Erin. With due dates in the thick of winter, we figure that the newest additions will have time for several months of indoctrination and thus be ready for their first trips this summer. We're planning on keeping them on a tight schedule though, in order to work their driving lessons in between feedings and naps. Web updates will be available at: [www.AdventureAlaskaTours.com/specialprojects](http://www.AdventureAlaskaTours.com/specialprojects)



**Left:** John Robinson demonstrates that no fish can be safe from his presence, no matter the hour of day or night (*--here about midnight at Tangle Lake*). His wife Jo is dutifully impressed, as were all the other patrons stumbling out of the nearby bar . . .

**Right:** Fearless guide Joe leans into the new tram over the Winner Creek Gorge near Girdwood. He's hoping that this action has nothing to do with child rearing, figuratively or otherwise.

## Staff Updates

The roster this year at Adventure Alaska sported the same crew in its employ. Masochists they must be, and we're hoping that will continue . . .

**Jeannine** continues to avoid total retirement (when is a mother ever really retired?) by handling, "transport projects". She's already planning next spring's expedition up the Alcan highway, to yet again deliver a van. Her little cross continent odyssey has become more and more popular and there's always a waitlist. . . . six ladies in a van, ranging from past clients to childhood cronies ---understandably, no men are allowed (or willing). Miss **Sheri** Bluestein endured her second season with us in dandy fashion, adding the Dayhiker Adventure to her 7-Day tour expertise. She did survive with great enthusiasm, her past winter's "summer" as a field worker at McMurdo Station in Antarctica. It was her return trip from there, via Thailand that determined her winter address of Amsterdam. She met a wonderful Dutch fellow (on the back of an elephant) and

after adventures back and forth since then, has become a resident of the Continent until next summer's tundra servitude. **Barbra** and **Todd** still pretend to direct matters, holding down the office world, occasionally impersonating guides, and of course working on that in-house employee development program. Todd did manage an interesting quick trip to Russia, flying himself and a couple of others on an inaugural flight trying to open an air corridor for private aircraft. Trips to other far off lands were this fall forestalled by world events and prenatal care. They've started though, an "addition for the addition" on the house, and while Barbra prepares the homefront, Todd is keeping busy commuting to Anchorage working on an aircraft mechanic license as part of his passion. **Patrick** once again



received the Most Masochistic Award, returning for his 8th season. After a stint in Baja, his off-season intentions are to visit family in France and then explore the nether regions of Australia. We're never sure until a random update arrives from a remote grass hut cyber cafe. **Joe** returned to our sordid team this summer and was yet again, king of the Dayhiker Adventure. He's back teaching in the Anchorage School District, while he and Erin await the little one. Joe has weakly promised not to be out skiing when it arrives.

**Chris and Kathleen** are back in their "real" jobs, teaching in the Wasilla school district. They got in some nice trips around the state and to others, visiting their daughter at school in Arizona. This past year **Lorraine** continued her fly-in dog sledding program on a glacier near Seward, with apparently increasing success. Other updates include the indispensable **Mark Bass**, who is planning on getting married this spring. We trust that marriage won't preclude his being available 24 hours a day to help with our pica-yune requests. As for **Heidi**, she's off to grad school in environmental studies in New Hampshire. And that's all from us.

### !!! Repeat Offender Program !!!

*ANNOUNCING JUSTIFICATION FOR THOSE GLUTTON-  
OUS ENOUGH TO THINK OF RETURNING FOR A TRIP  
WITH US* —If you've survived one before, you get a 10% discount on the next one. If you've already stumbled back before this offer, apply it to the NEXT trip. We'd love to see a few of our friends again!