

adventure

ALASKA

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Slower, yes, But not quieter . . .

...and we thought last year was slow...! Unfortunately the summer of 2003 was no better for our little tour company. We're hanging in there though. Remaining upbeat, we are focusing on a rising trend towards last minute bookings. When at one time people were booking trips 8-10 months in advance, now it seems folks are often waiting 'til May to confirm their trip to Alaska, so we're just hoping that trend proves consistent and business picks up in the Spring. The entire tourism industry in Alaska suffered last summer, and with several companies going out of business, we feel fortunate that we're still able to, "keep the lights on".

All was not woe, and with fewer clients there was correspondingly a bit less chaos, and thus the opportunity to take a few more breaths (and change diapers). 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.

Next year is of course remains a question mark, but we'll see! We're in it for the long haul (14 years now --- gasp!) and the mountains promise to remain magnificent . . .



That rather famous Park



The Management

Old News New News

As if to add insult to injury, on top of our decreased summer business Mother Nature dealt an early fierce blow last winter by essentially dumping all our "rightful" Alaskan snow on the Eastern seaboard. Alaska was brown as could be. We had one moderate snowfall in December and then not another flake. Temperatures hovered around 40 all season. Mostly we were dealing with rain, wind and ice. Elsewhere it might not have been so bad, but in the North, so many things are predicated on quantities of that white stuff on frozen ground, allowing access to much of the roadless state otherwise impenetrable. From construction, to travel and leisure, no snow makes for many unhappy sorts. In an unprecedented move, the Iditarod Sled Dog Race route was moved to a more northern (and slightly snowier) location, with the start occurring in Fairbanks instead of Anchorage. Even with the change, many parts of the trail were bare, brown or under water. For the first time in twelve years we were forced to cancel our Iditarod Tour and refund all 12 people, sadly informing them that their trip was being cancelled due to a lack of winter in Alaska! Several of these folks lived in the Washington DC and New York City area, where they were literally buried in snow. And we were calling to tell them we had none...crazy!

So far this winter, Mother Nature is living up to her fickle reputation, giving us our whole season's average total with still five months to go . . . We have no shortage of snow but could use a few more Iditarod trip participants . . . If

anyone out there is toying with the idea of coming to Alaska in the "off season", this is certainly the one to do it --we've had three times the normal amount of snow so far, and it's a winter wonderland up here. It's a fantastic trip (semi-biased person talking, but just ask any past participant!) and there's no better way to enjoy it than a dog sled trip --and this year past clients get \$400 off . . .

As far as the newest Adventure Alaska family members, Jack Schumacher and Liam Bureau, they are full-fledged walking, talking toddlers. Jack turned two in December and Liam will be two in February. They don't get to see each other very often but when they do, they quickly exchange notes on parenting, diaper brands and choice toys. Jack's a train specialist and Liam is into anything heavy-machinery related. "Backhoe" was his first word - no kidding. Todd, Barb, Erin & Joe are having a blast during this exciting and occasionally, exhausting phase of parenting.



The ever-alluring search for gold --and look at those beards!

Staff Updates

The roster this year at Adventure Alaska sported almost 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?) doing occasional phone duty. Alas, this year's trip up the Alcan highway to deliver a van was postponed until next. Her little cross continent odyssey has always been popular and there remains a waitlist. . . . six ladies in a van, ranging from past clients to childhood cronies ---understandably, no men are allowed (or willing). **Sheri** Bluestein, after three seasons with us decided to make Amsterdam her permanent address. We miss her terribly but she and Michiel are doing well. They've done plenty of world traveling, Sheri's become fluent in Dutch, and is now working on Spanish. We just wish we could convince them to make Alaska their summer residence! **Barbra** and **Todd** are still directing matters, holding down the office world and taking orders from, The King, Liam. There is not a more

self-centered creature in the world than a toddler and we're doing our best to perpetuate that by tending to his every whim. He's actually been quite gracious in his treatment of his minions. Epic travels were curtailed a bit this year, but we did do a little hopping around during the slower times, with Liam proving a delightful traveler (hours by small plane, much camping, and a three week, 4500 mile car seat road trip). Barbra has held up quite well in motherhood, flipping pancakes with one hand, and the baby with the other. Todd continues his winter commute to Anchorage working on certification as an aircraft mechanic as part of his passion, while developing a laser-based landing system for our wee airstrip. **Patrick** once again received the Most



Jack and Liam plot hostile takeover strategies

Masochistic Award, returning for his 10th season. He spends the winter bee-bopping around the U.S. in his trusty Trooper, always seeking out warmer climes. . . We're never sure where he's at until a random update arrives from some remote cyber cafe. **Joe** was back at it this summer, guiding the Yukon River trips as well as the Dayhiker Adventure. He found a much better niche in the Anchorage School District, while he and Erin proudly steward young Jack toward guidedom. **Kathleen** and **Chris Jones** are back in their "real" jobs, teaching in the Wasilla school district. Known to Liam as "Aunt Kathleen", she continues to spoil him rotten, standing in and more than making up for any and all distant relatives, known or otherwise. **Lorraine Temple** sold her dog sled tour business to aspiring Iditarod mushing couple Jason & Kelly and we're looking forward to this year's Iditarod trip with them. **Mark Bass** and wife Emily bought a house in Anchorage but spend much of their time in McCarthy working on their "cabin" there. It's becoming quite a cozy little abode. As for **Heidi**, she continues grad school in environmental studies in New Hampshire. And that's all from us.

!!! Repeat Offender Program !!!

ANNOUNCING JUSTIFICATION FOR THOSE GLUTTONOUS 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!