

adventure

ALASKA

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Another Fun One!

...comes to a close, with all guests and guides, for the most part, accounted for. It was a summer of weather extremes, with knee-deep snowy hikes in June, temperatures in the 90's in July and seemingly endless rain in August (this is not a typical pattern; it can do any of the above in any order!). And speaking of weather, as we write this, we are sitting in McCarthy, in our little cabin, "stuck" here for a couple weeks with the road washed out . . . along with the only road to Valdez, the only one to Seward, and the only one in Cordova --part of the reason this newsletter is a tad late getting out to you all. Though being "trapped" in the country's largest National Park, with the playground of the Wrangell Mountains and Root Glacier just out the door, isn't really so bad...

It does drive home the differing realities that are unique to each of us, and that fact is a source of profound appreciation each season, as we get to glimpse that of others through the course of travel. It is that exchange between people wandering through new lands and experiences, that continues to animate our world and, keep it all fresh. If it weren't for that, our guides would most likely move on in short order (--it's certainly not the glamour and high pay!). Though any small business can at times seem a succession of moments of scramble, there are the innumerable ones that offset, and those remind us how lucky we are to do what we do.

Flood damage at Kennicott



Kennicott Update - Many of you will recognize the neighborhood, looking toward the Mill Building from just before the train trestle. The recent flood opened a new channel in front of the hospital (in background), compromised the trestle bridge, and damaged a number of other buildings. History doesn't pause. See the Anchorage Daily News article of 10/30/06 at www.adn.com



At least the temperature was warm

Old News

New News

For the first year in a while, we took a break from any serious property projects, putting aside an ambitious cabin building plan in McCarthy (we're letting the logs "age" another year!). We did though spend some quality time on our island world this summer, catching up with some of the "Adventure" groups here, and at one point in June, assessing the damage from another huge flood, this one an entirely different phenomenon. Each year, high in the Kennicott Glacier an ice dam forms Hidden Lake, releasing a torrent under the glacier once the pressure dictates. In days gone by it used to predictably wash out the railroad trestle to McCarthy, but with the glaciers shrinking, the event has become a bit more sedate. This summer it happened in a big way once again, taking away much of the "junk yard" adjacent to our property (oh darn!) as well as actually washing away some of the island. Fortunately the cabin and tent sites were unaffected as the flood was restricted to the Kennicott River side of the island. Imagine van-sized chunks of glacial ice crammed up against the foot bridge... Mama Nature reminds that she can't be trifled with.

At our Jack River/Cantwell location we use as our Denali base for camping trips, we were anticipating doing some more improvements this summer. But, it turned out to be the source of great frustration as we were not able to access it most of the summer due to a dispute between a local landowner and a native corporation. It's taken more

than a year to prod that legendarily nimble bureaucracy, The Bureau of Indian Affairs, to take action. Guaranteed job security doesn't seem to foster keen customer service.

Trip itineraries were fine tuned a bit this year, with just slight changes to most. Prices were forced to rise though, with fuel affecting EVERYTHING here in this colony Alaska. Next year, the Arctic Tour will undergo a significant alteration, eliminating the 500 mile drive to Inuvik in the Northwest Territories, and thus allowing a couple of nights in perennial favorite Eagle, to leisurely poke about and better taste that unique outpost. We will again be taking just five lucky (?) souls on this unique itinerary, making it our most exclusive and "private" trip.



View from the creekside fire ring at the McCarthy camp

We do have two new itineraries premiering in 2007! The 6-Day **Alaska Highlights Tour** promises to touch upon just that – some of Alaska's highlights along the paved road system. It's a "tour" which means the comfort of indoor lodging each night, hot showers, and toilets that go whoosh. It features Denali for two nights, Fairbanks, Chena Hot Springs, Valdez and Prince William Sound. Even with an overnight at a hot springs, it's spirit is still in the hallmark of adventure, exploring some of Alaska's lesser visited locales.

The new 10-Day **Alaska Multi-Sport Adventure** should also be a great addition to the list. Designed for those who want a tad more motion/excitement in their vacation, it will feature some moderate hiking, glacier walking, sea kayaking and river rafting. Camping half the nights will allow groups to fully appreciate the landscape (and the whims of the Elements). Though an adventure for sure, this trip is designed, as are all our adventures, for anyone with a moderate level of fitness and a propensity towards flexibility and fun!

One of our biggest projects of the summer actually took place indoors – a total revamping of the website. Guide Sheri, her husband Michiel, and Todd worked for many hours and we're proud of the evolving product. More features to come, whence the winter world makes it an attractive alternative activity. Check it out – same address, same yokels, new look.

Staff Updates

One of the things we can't help but feel the most proud of, is the quality of our guide staff. These fine folks have been with us for years and we are ever confident sending them to all corners of Alaska and the Far North to show the nooks and crannies that make small group travel so special. **Patrick** survived season #13 with no bad luck and he is now most



Results of Hope School recruitment campaign

likely relaxing on a quiet beach somewhere in either California, Mexico or Australia! **Joe** returned this summer to again guide our canoeing and hiking trips. Though his groups were small, he enjoyed the variety of personalities and terrain. He and Erin, with kids, Jack & Sadie, have been spending a good deal of time in our home community of Hope, as they've just purchased a wonderful parcel of land there, surrounded by the Chugach National Forest. They hope to have a dwelling (read: wall tent) up by Spring. **Sheri** completed season #5, a bit rain soaked but none worse (?) for wear. She and Michiel are back in Antarctica now, basking in the southern summer and if they don't "overwinter" there, will return to their little cabin in Hope by May. **Kathleen & Chris** spent most of the summer driving an RV from Tennessee to Alaska and exploring everywhere in between. Kathleen only managed a short guiding stint in June. **Barb & Todd** continue their attempt at overseeing all, with growing help from 4 ½ year old Liam. Discovery Cabins in Hope keeps Barb busy most days, and Todd and Liam fill in wherever necessary, from flying supplies to Eagle or McCarthy to swinging hammers and fixing vans.

!!! 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. Maybe try a new itinerary or another season --The Iditarod! We'd love to see a few of our friends again!