

adventure

ALASKA

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Whewww!

No season is exactly like another, but never have we ended one hoping that major aspects not ever be repeated. From natural disasters, to an economy where travel to a distant expensive land understandably just doesn't make the cut, this year provided "challenges" unlike any others in our now twenty years of operation. Nonetheless, we look back, and to the future, feeling quite fortunate on so many fronts. Life has its rhythms, but we still have the livelihood of our choice. And, what got broken, can be fixed. And of course there were those leavening moments of Alaska lurching onto a wider stage . . . (think Tina Fey).

2009 started with a bang (literally); the spectre of a pesky volcano clouding the Iditarod, and actually causing some to recast their summer travel plans. It settled down, and then a certain river rose up. For those of you with personal memory of our long-loved locale of Eagle, you can begin to comprehend from the photos, the unbelievable disaster there. More at <http://eaglefloodinfo.wikispaces.com>. The Yukon did what there's no evidence of it having done in that area before --a freak fall freeze-up of ice jumbles and continued thickening from a very cold winter, was followed by an unprecedented late April stretch of 80 degree sunshine, conspiring to flood Eagle with ice and water 52 feet above normal levels. An implacable wall of ice blocks several stories tall bulldozed into oblivion Eagle Village, and destroyed most of the buildings of historic Front Street in Eagle itself. The river island was completely shorn of three hundred year old trees.



Our floating cabins, plus imports



The Yukon River and ice, destroying Front Street in Eagle

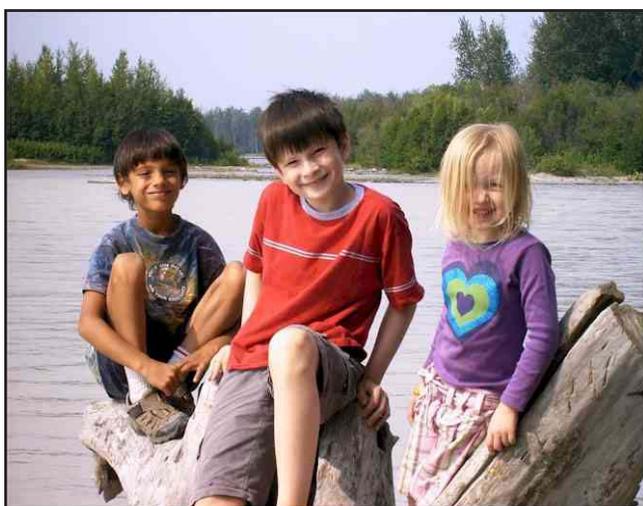
The four story log B&B just below us was pushed by the ice fifty feet from its foundation, colliding with one of our cabins and doing the same to it. Another "neighbor" cabin was spun around and did the same to the bath house. Ours though are salvageable. Others, their principal residences, were crushed. The town's only store, cafe and motel were destroyed, as were numerous other buildings, many historic.

As a frontier town though where life has never been easy, it is a resilient one. Roads have been rebuilt, ruined structures have been dismantled and countless tons of debris removed. Incredibly, in the short months of summer eighteen houses have already been rebuilt. Volunteers from parts everywhere nearly doubled the town population. The B&B was lifted and moved (professionally --only \$40K!) back to its foundation. Todd managed to jack up and level the bath house to await a later move, and the larger cabin was raised to install log "skids" under it. We'll head back in late winter to flood the area and make an "ice road", to hopefully slide it back into place --that's how the theory goes at least! Then it's repair time . . .

Having spent considerable time there this year, one could only conclude though that it is still, a truly singular place, in feel and beauty. While its essence has been altered, the history that permeates it has a new anchoring chapter. Some residents have moved on, while others have a renewed commitment. A fair number of summer volunteers have also been intrigued enough to be considering year round there. So, from devastation unknown opportunities present themselves. The unbroken stretch of gravel that was the downtown, might yet become a park, with a view like no other. Stay tuned . . .

Other News

As for the actual business of tours, the folks this season that we had the privilege to host all felt like family, and in fact some wonderfully came as such. The delightful Herod crew traveled with us in 1995 with but two generations. And now with time, there's a third. It was a special privilege to travel together again, and inspirational to be able to witness the lengthening bonds across the years. Others were: a generous aunt treating two fine nephews to unique moments, a mother and daughter, and of course, the "families" that were constituted by travel, some braving back to back trips and some returning from previous seasons. All is not charmed though, as veteran E. Porter has traveled with us on five occasions, and has yet to see Denali . . .



Sasha, Ethan and Alexa, Herods all

New News

Well, with that future in mind, we do have a bit of an announcement to make. Undaunted by the economic climate or good sense, we are branching into a whole new neighborhood. The desert. Yup, right up our alley and in keeping with our expertise. The truth is, we have for years been looking for a wee excuse to offset the "seasonality" of the far North, both in livelihood and length of winter. After years of wandering, we have chosen the Big Bend area of deep southwest Texas. It's wild, wooly, and remote, with surprising parallels to Alaska. The land dominates, and its severity is integral to its beauty. There's rugged mountains, a wild river(!?), and lots of solitude and of course, the unique ilk that chooses to call it home. So, with the idea to run a few small-scale trips in the fall months, we have committed to a wee compound near Terlingua, sandwiched between two huge parks, the Big Bend National Park and Big Bend Ranch State Park. We've been exploring for the past couple of years and working out some tentative itineraries. A website is forthcoming. Stay tuned, wish us luck and, "C'mon down"! *(note the drawl)*

website: www.AdventureAlaskaTours.com

Staff Updates

And leaving the best for last, we give you our annual guide update, prefaced of course with nothing but kudos and admiration for these folks who dedicate their summer to being our ambassadors of Alaska. **Patrick** returned for his 16th year, enthusiastic as usual though like all of us, with a diminished schedule. He's now soaking up some much needed vitamin D on the beaches of California before heading on a cruise through the Panama Canal and on to visit family in France and Australia. **Joe** sat this one out, but played hard before having shoulder surgery that left him frustratingly "grounded". He is now back to his "real" job of teaching high school English and French in Anchorage. He and family are frequent folks in Hope with their cabin here.

Kathleen & Chris got the summer off too, though we did have a nice visit both directions. They managed to keep very busy nonetheless and are now back to winter jobs, teaching elementary and high school in Wasilla. **Sheri**, and husband **Michiel** spent what they vow is their last winter in Antarctica



Tough times require drastic measures: our new transport

then it was on to Tonga, New Zealand, the Netherlands and an extended stint in Spain. Keep up with their fascinatingly paripatetic world at www.michielandsheri.blogspot.com/ **Barb, Todd and Liam** had been looking at the holes in our summer schedule as an opportunity to actually taste a bit of Alaska's fleeting summer, but flood events and guiding conspired against such frivolity. 'Twas a beautiful summer though, and some darned fine moments were had. They're currently flaying about getting fall projects taken care of before heading to parts south, exploring parks, visiting family and of course, that little project in the Big Bend.

!!! 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 you again!

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