

adventure

ALASKA

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Onward, onward

Well, after two years running of suffering physical calamities in various locations, this season we delightfully have none of such to report. The forest fires were few and the sun graced more this summer than last (though a Day Hiker Adventure found most every location where "humidity" was highest --you know who you are!). The frontier outpost of Eagle continues its rebuilding, experiencing all the gradual, lurching steps towards a new normal, after its ice and flood devastation of 2009. Geology did say hello to us though, with the creek next to our island camp in McCarthy decamping to the other side of the valley. Oh well, it'll be back, next year or next century.

The economy of course is another subject. We, like households and enterprises everywhere, adjusted as best we could. While visually evidenced by half full parking lots in proverbially packed locations like Denali (not all bad!), the more pervasive effects are in fewer employees and less support of all the other small businesses. It is of course a pernicious circle that has made itself felt in many industries, and with tourism most decidedly a discretionary choice, expensive destinations like ours can't expect to be immune.

We though, feel quite fortunate in that most of our longtime "family" have day jobs and alternatives, and we as a business are planning on being around a goodly bit longer. Hearing tales from those losing their employment and needing to cancel trips, makes one appreciative of the fact that we do indeed still have our chosen means of suste-



Skipping lessons on a painfully sunny day at Fox Island



A tundra hike on a slightly less sunny adventure

nance. Downsizing here doesn't mean a pink slip (it could be a mite awkward, in a certain sense, letting oneself go), it rather means belt tightening. Of course after a few more years of such, it might feel more like a tourniquet. This too is an additional reason for the discontinuance of our humble brochure, consideration of multiple types of resources.

Undaunted though, we forge ahead with plans for some new offerings for next year, and at last, the long threatened official opening of operations in the far off lands of West Texas. More on that later.

New News

Changing things up is never without a wee sigh of trepidation, but after long ponder (and inertia) we decided to add longer versions of our two most popular itineraries. It's not always easy to determine some of the less salient reasons for an itinerary's success, with price of course figuring prominently, but also duration for the perennially vacation challenged Americans. Pushing both, we'll see with a nine day version of the All Alaska Tour including an extra night in Denali and McCarthy, and the Kenai Explorer having an option for an additional night in Homer. We hope both will find adequate audience in their bid to "lessen the hasten", both for guests and guides.

With similar rationale, we've added a new camping itinerary designed more for aging frames (again, both guide and guest), with a trip that promises a tent in only McCarthy, where we have options for both play and shelter, should conditions, "vary". It's called the *Alaska Wild* . . .

This last March successfully saw a major revamp of our one-of-a-kind Iditarod Tour, proving popular with the four souls participating. Drive dogs, sleep in a bed, a concept at which the real mushers might scoff. With winter moderating, it truly is a great time of the year, particularly when centered on a defining event that in many ways is the seasonal reawakening for many Alaskans.

Well, the only other tiny bit of news concerns that new latitudinal focus. In the fall of 2012 we will at last welcome our first guests to the new desert operation in the Big Bend area of southwest Texas. In a bid to offset some of the seasonality of the far North, both in livelihood and length of winter, we're inviting folks to come share a place of surprising parallel to Alaska in its haunting beauty and remoteness. Here too the land dominates, and its severity is integral to its beauty. There are rugged mountains, a wild and scenic river, and lots of solitude and most certainly, the unique ilk that chooses to call it home.



The Chisos, or Ghost Mountains

Pulling primarily from our past northern guests, this is a much smaller scale program, hosting just two to six folks at a time during a few week window in the fall and spring. Trips will be customized from a selection of offerings detailed on the website, thus promising an experience tailored to the interests of each group. There's a tremendous number of options, both in destinations and desired degree of exertion, with a minimum of five days needed for a first visit, and seven to ten allowing much more flexibility.

Guests will base from our "compound", located just south of the ghost town of Terlingua, between the huge Big Bend National Park and a massive State Park to the west. Of course it's not near anywhere and that's part of its saving grace. We've been researching and exploring furiously for the past several years with trip details at the website:

www.adventurealaskatours.com/bigbend

And, in keeping with the timeliness of the Neanderthals, we have joined the age of social media. Yes, kicking and screaming, we at last have a Facebook page. If so inclined, become a "fan" and receive periodic updates. No, no twittering.

Staff Updates

Leaving the best for last, we give you our annual guide update. The staffing was necessarily a bit skinnier, though all finished reasonably sane. **Patrick** returned for his 19th year, enthusiastic as usual though like all of us, with a diminished schedule. He's currently in California, being a healthy sort in food and activity, contemplating whether a surf board will again be toying with his longevity, or not. Winter plans range from France to Australia, to a visit to Big Bend. He's not yet been, but does have a cabin with his name on it. **Sheri** and **Michiel** fortunately already had other plans, again returning to work in Antarctica, she as an IT trainer of staff and the constantly rotating scientific personnel, and he as lead of his IT workcenter. Their goal in doing such is to purchase a piece of southern France and to there slowly transition from seasonal work. Long term plans include tours too, so stay tuned at michiellandsheri.blogspot.com/



All is not sedate for the thrill seeking sort - swim Lisa swim!

We miss them greatly, as do the vegetable gardens in Hope. **Kathleen & Chris** got the summer off too, though we did have some wonderful visits from them in Hope. **Joe** sat this one out, but he and family are frequent folks in Hope with their cabin here. . . available for impromptu guide "reunions". **Barb, Todd and Liam** managed to survive another one, between trip and cabin duties, punctuated by Legos (Liam). All was not work with a few forays to a nearby "secret" camp on the Inlet, a low-tide only overnight hike to a WWII era fort, and delightful repose in McCarthy before and after the season of chaos. Shortly it is off to visit family in parts of the East, exploring parks and serendipitous locales in the West via aging camper van, and on to that southern work camp in Texas. Sigh (a good one).

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