

adventure

ALASKA

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A good one.

Well, the only thing one couldn't miss this summer was that the sun shone --and shone. If you were one of those that enjoyed direct Vitamin D production this year, pause and thank those that have traveled in the years previous where windshield wipers and raingear were the norm, and sunglasses not. Either the past offerings to the rain gods finally produced, or we've a pent-up debt to pay!

Records were set all across the state. Anchorage had the most consecutive days above 70 (15); Fairbanks 36 days above 80 degrees, and a memorable day of panting at 92 degrees in Eagle. And on one of the best canoe trips ever, the whole dang group even swam in the Yukon River on the paddle down from Dawson City. Another record enroute was Earl Porter's 8th trip with us. Take that Rhode Island.

Alas, there is still a pendulum, as August was decidedly, well August. Anchorage had 18 consecutive days of rain. Ten days after 92, it was 22 in Eagle. Hopefully that brings the account into balance, and thus doesn't threaten those that might wander this way in the future . . .

And amongst all that sun-dappled scenery, travelled some of the most delightful folks. We're continually amazed at the quality and depth of those that we get the opportunity to host (and that keeps us going!), but as one can imagine, in any enterprise there's occasionally a personality or two that just doesn't score as high on the pleasant meter. This year, not a one. Hope that's not another accounting issue.



Indefatigable Mr. Porter and daughter Lesley, on the Yukon



Climb'em before they're gone --The Mat Glacier

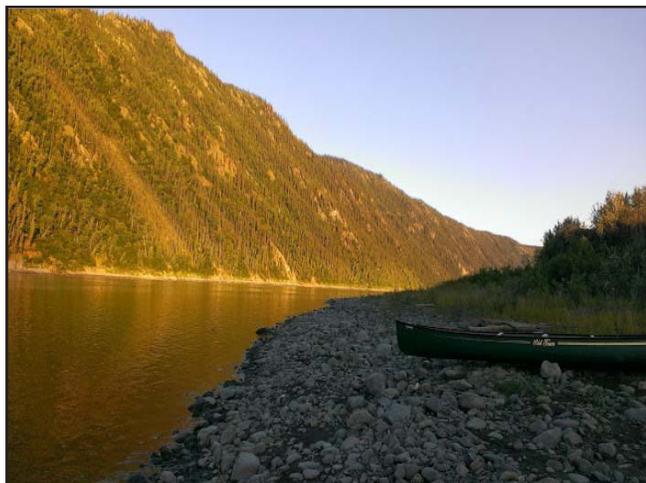
Of particular reward, is the privilege to host family groups. It's fulfilling beyond words to witness multiple generations making memories together. This summer it was three "cycles" of the Tordoffs coming from hither and yon, and next year for the Iditarod, from the land of Kiwis, it's three of the Allison's, who first traveled with us all the way back in 1993! Getting to see a new "crop" puts perspective on Life, Leisure, and What It's All About. It does too though, occasionally make one cognizant of the number of years, but you know the future ones are in good hands when there's such a strong connection to those before.

New News

Speaking of that accumulation of years, we're certainly not immune, and their passage has us contemplating some gentle changes. No, no, we're not tacking up a "Closed" sign or uttering the Big "R" of retirement, but we are consciously being a bit more selectively selfish in our endeavors. As part of a planned "phase-down", we've begun limiting the length of the "season of chaos", in the purely self-interested goal of adjusting slightly the ratio of profit to play. The season for both is already frighteningly short, but with many years of chasing the former, we're vowing to allot a bit more to the latter. As many of us came north (lo these many years ago!), with the exuberance and desire to explore, the realization every year that summer has already come and gone, leads to ponder of what's maybe been missed. We're continually conscious of the great fortune to "do what we do", but, that includes the option not to, too! So, if the phone rings a time or two unanswered, smile, and think of us somewhere out in the sticks (--probably under that payback rain cloud!).

As not to lead you to believe that there's some groundswell of sanity afoot, do remember that we've ensured keeping life nutty by opening a wee operation in the nearby state of Texas. This fall arrive our very first victims there, survivors of jaunts with us on the northern Last Frontier. From our "compound" between the National Park and massive State Park, we'll explore the Big Bend region with some incredible hikes, some fantastic overnight cultural forays, and few days on the wild and scenic Rio Bravo. Not many Texans even know that there's a 8000' mountain range and a river with 1500' canyons in the state. And that's one of the reasons it's so darned special. Volkswagen-sized belt buckles don't float.

In line with that desire to bend the season, the Big Bend operation falls during a few weeks only so far, parts of October and November. Pulling primarily from our past northern guests, this is a much smaller scale program, hosting just two to four folks at a time. So, take out a map and trace your finger way down to far southwest Texas, and that "big bend" on the border. Or, take a peek at the website www.adventurealaskatours.com/bigbend and get an idea of why we think it's pretty special. There's space next fall . . . c'mon down!



The Yukon at sunset --after midnight!

Pondering the photo above, some of you might wonder as to the status of the unique little river town of Eagle. Unbelievably, this spring after only four years since the massive ice flooding of 2009, a number of homes were again destroyed by the same. The damage wasn't nearly as widespread this time, but to happen twice when there's no evidence of anything similar in the past 200 years, is debateable fodder for the, "climate ain't changing" club. With the consequent loss of the large tours, the Museum and some of the small craft merchants are indeed struggling, but it's still a place of unparalleled uniqueness and beauty.

On another note, we did in recent years join the age of social media. Yes, we're still Neanderthals but we do have a Facebook page. If so inclined, become a "fan" and receive periodic updates. No, no twittering. Also, if you'd be inclined, trip reviews on TripAdvisor.com are much appreciated! Thanks.

Staff Updates

Leaving the best for last, we give you our annual guide update. In the tenuous climate of the last few years, we maintained a skeleton staff, with **Patrick** (his 20th year with us!) shouldering much of the guiding. And as many of you can attest, he's consummate at it. He's shortly off to Europe to visit family (and be a guide!), then they'll hop on a "repositioning" cruise (meaning cheap and uncrowded) for a couple of weeks from Barcelona back Gavelston, TX. There is pre-planned purchase of a suitable chariot for the westward ho to visit us in the Big Bend. We predict the delay there long, before the final trickle to his wintering grounds in California. **Sheri** and **Michiel** alas remain on different continents. Last year they bought a delightful abode in the south of France, and spent this summer putting a new roof on it - a feat of historical, financial and gymnastic accomplishment. They were both headed back to Antarctica for another season, when Sheri's position was "sequestered". Michiel has already shipped out, meaning that they'll sadly be apart for the "ice" season. At least her roof won't leak.



Traffic issues on the Taylor - caribou rush hour

Kathleen & Chris made it to Hope for several wonderful visits. Chris retired from teaching last year, followed by Kathleen this year. I think they both whistled during "back to school" sales. **Barb, Todd and Liam** managed to survive another one. The cabins keep Barb in Hope most of the summer, while the boys spent a couple of weeks in Eagle completing flood damage work and shoring up the historic Amundsen cabin. Hauling endless buckets of dirt out from the crawlspace was tempered by a four day canoe down the 40 Mile (white water!) and Yukon back to Eagle. Soon it's off to the second biggest state in the Union to ready the desert compound for our first guests. Yikes. All in all, a good year for all, and all still feeling quite fortunate to do it.

!!! 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! Or, the Big Bend! We'd love to see you again.