

# adventure

# ALASKA

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## A Warm One

Almost invariably the question comes up when traveling with our guests, as to just what are the effects we're seeing as a result of climate change. Well, the simple answer is, plenty. They are manifest, undeniable, and frightening in their implications. I won't enter into the debate of the causes, but will say that I'm with the 99% of the scientific community for the same reason that I wouldn't refuse antibiotics if suffering a life-threatening infection, because 1% of the population doesn't believe in them. The data is incontrovertible. Beyond the planet aggregate temperature exceeding the previous year's record three in a row --headlines dominate the media here: "Anchorage Hottest Month Ever", "Sea Ice at All-time Minimum", "North Slope 86 Degrees!", etc. It's accepted that the arctic is warming at about twice the rate as elsewhere and the results are "impressive". As limited example, for man, Arctic engineering previously based on the "perma" part of permafrost has led to building and roadbed failure, for animals, recent studies range from showing a 20% increase in heretofore unrecorded species in arctic waters, to a predicted loss of arctic breeding habitat for two thirds of migratory birds. In my short personal experience of thirty years, I now see trees much farther north. Sometimes unsettling news can be ignored for a bit, but it's certainly not advisable when it concerns your very existence. We too though, have in Alaska a congressional delegation doubling down on the former --sure wish future generations could vote early . . .

## New News

Well, off the soap box for a bit (just a bit though) and on to the warmth of traveling with past friends. Our Iditarod trip (moved to the North side of the Alaska Range for the 3rd year due to lack of snow --yes, in Alaska) saw returnee Adrian Bland back all the way from England and 1995, and Bill and Lorena Hardam, four-time veterans, including the Big Bend. Back after an only three year absence were Dave and Geri Lynn Pillar, though all were topped by the inveterate Marilyn Godfrey, who from 1992 has graced our state on nearly countless trips, this time again accompanied by son Scott. See, traveling to Alaska is even good for longevity.

In keeping with our long-announced trajectory of less during the summer months, our trips this year did not include the fine month of June, and it was consequently thoroughly enjoyed by "staff". The North is indeed a fine country to enjoy, but as is the case for most of us, employ-

ment can at times get in the way. Being the ones dictating that has its advantages and we were able to prevail on Human Resources to schedule a pause, one that allowed for some fine trips down roads with somewhat strangely, only family in the rear view mirror.

More of the same is planned for next year, so if the phone isn't answered on the second ring, we're either trapped under a log or having a darned fine time. It's been such a delight over the years, to be able to be a part of folks making memories, we're emphasizing making a few more of our own.



*Rafting the Nizina w/bush plane pick-up*

## A Plea

Here in the North, Fall is quite brief and Winter is already making its presence felt. Nationally it means a certain election is fast approaching, and this year there's been more than the usual amount of "snow". This particular season though, I do believe that the electoral choice demands a scrutiny like none previous. Party affiliation, gut, and media portrayal, fair or otherwise, have always played a part in choosing our representatives. But this time when it comes to electing the Leader of the Free World, whatever your news sources, moral underpinnings, or past leanings, there's really only one candidate that has demonstrated concern for anything other than themselves. It's something beyond politics when at its very basis, it becomes a matter of simple decency --toward your fellow man, the planet, and those of our offspring that will make it home in the generations to come. Our country has a unique and inspiring legacy, one to uphold and improve, not to vilify and squander. Our nation's greatest source of strength is often as a moral example to the world, and like parenthood, we don't get a "do-over".

## Staff Updates

As for staffing, we've slowly pared that down through attrition, in keeping with the stated glide path of less. Still, and hopefully forever in the saddle, is of course **Patrick** (his 24th year with us!). He shoulders much of the guiding, and as many of you can attest, he does it with undeniable aplomb. He knows nearly every nook and cranny on the road system, as well as the location of nearly every blueberry bush in between. He's looking forward to his third fall session of offering small custom tours in France. After more than two decades of pondering it (and fending off many requests), in the last couple of years he's led northern guests of ours on custom experiences in Brittany and Provence. If you've ever thought of a truly personal experience in that fine country . . . **Sheri** and **Michiel** continue to manage their long absences apart, by making the most of when they're not. After several seasons in Antarctica and working on South Georgia Island, Sheri has become a coveted expedition cruise guide. With all her life and travel experience, natural history knowledge and training in the operation of inflatable Zodiac boats, she is able to maximize the experience for the engaged folks that make up her clientele. This past summer



*Exploring the Matanuska Glacier on crampons*

included Southeast Alaska, with Antarctica trips during the civil season in that hemisphere. Michiel has just returned to Antarctica, to the small outpost of Palmer Station, as integral part of the IT team that keeps it all humming. He's hoping next year to do the same for the expedition cruise company, so that he and Sheri might see more of each other. And how we know all those details is that **Barb, Todd and Liam** just returned from a dandy visit that direction, to their well-chosen home in the French Pyrenees. After a rendezvous and exploration of Barcelona, we all traveled to their side of the border, to hike merrily in the gorgeous mountains that surround their delightful corner of thoroughly rural France. Yes, the wine, cheese and bread was in keeping with fine tradition. It was a nice reward after an exhausting summer of having fun. Todd and Liam made it to several music festivals, though one wasn't as fond a memory as hoped, as

Liam's appendix opted to rupture far from home. Heck of a weight-loss program, but all is now mended. The entire family had some dandy camper-based jaunts for hiking, sea kayaking and catch-up local tourism. Last winter was a family trip through the Panama Canal, and Todd played guide for a couple of client trips to Mexico. He'll head back to the southern border shortly, to resume some flightseeing and charter work for a local Big Bend resort, as well as concerted desert enjoyment. A holiday dash about the country in a small plane is planned mid-winter, allowing us to check off the scattered family relations. There's definitely a rhythm to the seasons but movement is the constant refrain.



*Mongol invaders at a 12 century fort, southern France*

For those of you who remember guide **Heidi** from the '90's, (Marilyn Godfrey was on the Yukon River training trip for both Heidi and Patrick in 1992!) she and her husband (and two daughters) bought land a couple of years ago in our wee community of Hope, and through diligent effort, now have a striking 2-story "cabin" up. They come to play (i.e. mostly work on the house) often, and are bonding yet another generation with Hope. **Joe** and his family (also with a cabin in Hope!) make it here regularly as well, but with increasing school activities, the pauses are longer in between. **Chris and Kathleen** are still thoroughly retired, but were lucky enough to be playing the designated adults at the initial moment when Liam came to know his appendix so well. See, it is a big family.

Though not quite a family member, don't forget our little seasonal operation in **Big Bend**, if the winter blues seem to be hanging heavy this year. The hiking, rafting and playing are exceptional, and the sun nearly constant. Come and get an idea of why we think it's pretty special!

And for a final plug, we do have a Facebook page. If so inclined, become a "fan" and receive periodic updates. Also, if you'd be inclined, trip reviews on TripAdvisor.com are VERY much appreciated. Thanks.

### !!! 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.