

adventure

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A Last One

No, not this one, but 2018 --that's right though, a decision to wrap up this merry affair has at last been taken. After twenty seven years, and countless delightful (and a few not so!) moments, we're making the move to return our all-too-brief Alaskan summers to their original state of "unfettered". Intimated here in this annual rag for the last five years if you've been reading, has been the steady march of paring back, and that necessarily leads to only one end, the end. And so, with oodles upon oodles of exquisitely fond memories, and a profound gratitude for the privilege of having been able to do so, we'll conduct our last guided wanders next summer, and hang up the last set of van keys at the end of it. Of course, it's not without a little trepidation, as our wee enterprise has been as much lifestyle as livelihood. We've always been conscious of how frightenly uncommon it is to get to choose either in Life, and the fact that we have gotten to do so for both, and combine them in the most satisfyingly fortunate fashion imagineable, can only leave one eternally grateful. Many a past client has reminded us of such and fostered a continuous renewal of that appreciation. We thank you more than you might imagine for being a part of this privilege.

WHY, is usually the first question we encounter when announcing the big "R" of retirement. And the answer on the simple side is because we can, and on the selfish side, because we want to. We came North, lo these decades ago, to explore the wilds and unique crannies of these latitudes, and that desire has never quite diminished. Starting a business that operates during that all-too-brief season called summer, has meant that the few months best suited to those explorations have long been spoken for. As the years have ticked by, the "problem" has always been that there remain those river trips only partially completed, along with the nagging thoughts of so many an undiscovered campsite --all far too far from that unrelenting business demand --the leash of continual contact. And yes of course too there's age and its fleeting windows--the ones where the adults still have (at the moment!) the physical ability to play outside, and the temporal ones of crashing reminders of just how soon the next generation will be launching from our world and off into his own. So yes, maybe selfish, but wholly informed by awareness of the finiteness of human time.

A great part of the gratitude of the WHY has also determined the next logical question of HOW. Alaska has been so good in the opportunities, spoken and otherwise, that it has provided to us and so many others. It didn't take long after

arrival to fall under the "The Spell of the Yukon" and to paraphrase Robert Service, be "...twisted from foe to a friend..." for that, "...great, big, broad land 'way up yonder..." By dint of will (i.e. naivete/bullheadedness/youth, etc.) it has always felt easier here to ponder and undertake notions that elsewhere just wouldn't be considered practicable or prudent. Over the years we've also been able to do most of the work of our enterprise ourselves, the building, fixing, marketing, etc., thus keeping things reasonably profitable. Add to that militant savings habits and the friendly side of time --the wonder of compounding interest, and what seemed distant and unattainable gradually is not (a not-too-subtle encouragement to consider setting up Roth accounts for your grandchildren . . .!). Besides, we haven't renounced "work" entirely, with the cabins here in Hope, seasonal flightseeing and Big Bend/Mexico trips adding income. And, we haven't ruled out an occasional custom trip or two in the North for old friends (you!).



Dawson City, before a "civilian" Yukon River descent

So, there you have it. It seems dauntingly monumental to toy with one's self definition, but it's merely an evolution. The fact that once again in Life we've had the luxury to choose, is truly humbling. Thanks for being part of the journey. Ain't quite over yet though - C'mon back!

New News

Well, there's not much beyond that wee announcement above that isn't related. As Todd has been the last one standing willing to do the camping "Adventures", he's pondered for a few years (probably most often under a tent roof pounded by rain) the dwindling interest in those itineraries. There's been a steady decline in interest in trips that include sleeping outside. Happy Hour Wisdom theories abound, but a couple of distressing observations include the

the documented generational drop-off in the number of people that grew up with camping in their life. Generationally too, is the increasing horror at the notion that travel might not include an uninterrupted cell signal or wi-fi connection. As a demonstrable technological Luddite for not being much of a social media fan, that latter conclusion might be suspect. Personally though, it was restoratively refreshing to recently have a wilderness trip where the "Tweet O' The Day" didn't intrude, distress, or nauseate . . .

Staff Updates

As for staffing, we've steadily pared that down through attrition, in keeping with the stated glide path of less. Still in the saddle, is of course **Patrick** (his 25th 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 survived his fourth 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 several years he's led northern guests of ours on custom experiences in Brittany, Provence, and Normandy. If you've ever thought of a truly personal experience in that fine country . . .



A reunion up Palmer Creek by Hope

After many seasons in Antarctica, **Sheri** and **Michiel** both now work for the small expedition cruise arm of National Geographic, though not yet on the same vessel at the same time. She is an Expedition Leader, shepherding her charges to wild spots, often zinging them about in a zodiac, with destinations including Antarctica, southeast Alaska, and next the Columbia River. He is the Information Technology Officer for the vessel with this summer's wanders centered on Scandanavian regions. **Barb, Todd and Liam** had a delightful wander last year of the well-chosen home of those two in the French Pyrenees, with a second chapter of "reunioning" this year when they made it back to Hope in September. Over the summer the Bureau family had some dandy camper-based jaunts including Eagle for the 4th of July and on to Dawson City, to put the boys and a friend on the Yukon for the paddle

back to Eagle. Todd and Liam were back to Dawson but a week later as part of their mandatory circuit of music festivals. It can be grueling. August saw a family trip to Barb's folks in New Hampshire, and she got in an October trip to Hawaii while Todd did a river trip on the San Juan in Utah. Liam was the only responsible one, dutifully going to school. He did just win (*painful proud parent alert*) a district engineering contest for the third year in a row. That prompted a visit from an Anchorage news crew that put together a nice segment of how a tiny school can provide unique benefits. Since many of you have stayed at Discov-



Brothers Mierow, Jonathan, Bureaus ---the last Alaska Wild

ery Cabins right next to the school, you might be interested in the piece at www.adventurealaskatours.com/liam Todd will head back to the southern border shortly, to resume some flightseeing and guide some trips to Mexico's Copper Canyon. Barb and Liam will join in a few weeks for the annual holiday dash about the country in a small plane, allowing us to check off the scattered family relations. Liam will be accompanying his father back to the beautiful colonial Mexican city of Puebla this spring for language immersion. There's definitely a rhythm to the seasons but movement is the constant refrain! Thank you again.



Always fun --though at least Patrick has Leon's help!

!!! 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, the Big Bend! Might be the last chance . . . We'd love to see you again.