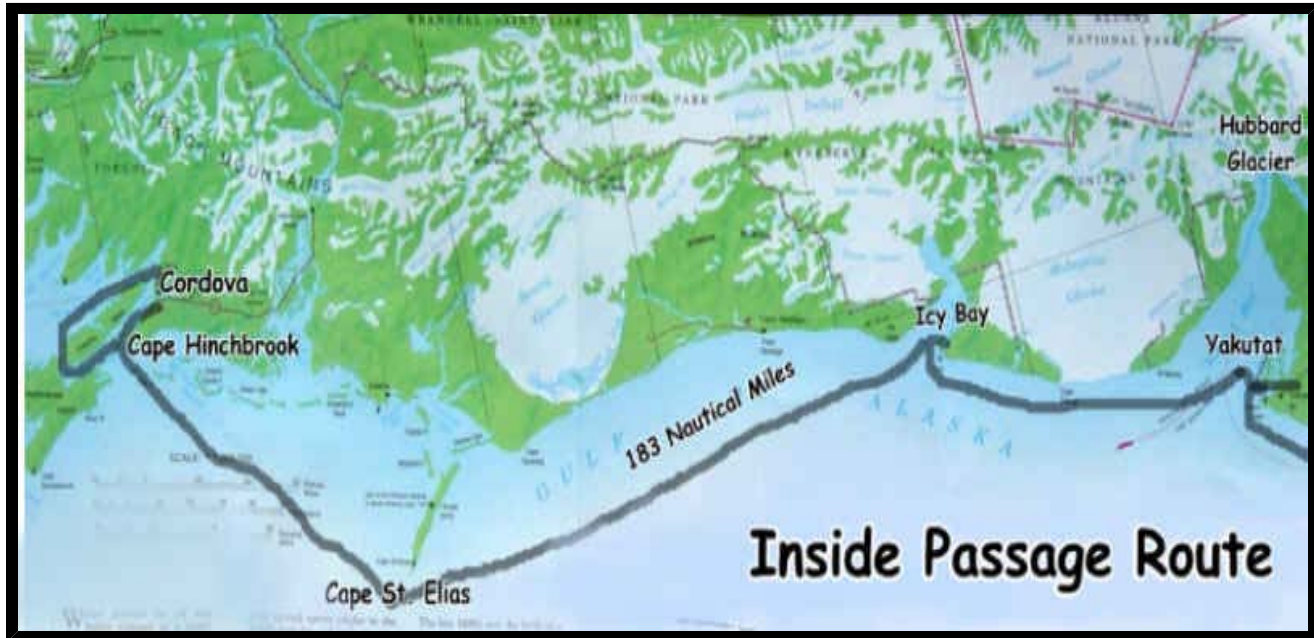


From: "Inside Passage" <Boat@BiancoProperties.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 04, 2001 4:02 PM
Subject: Inside Passage Journal #4



The map above (which should be visible for most non-AOL readers) shows the major portions of the trip covered in this edition of our journal. As we've started to grasp the graphics technology, we have busied ourselves during the travel portions by experimenting with the digital graphic options available on board.



Hubbard Glacier

No trip to Yakutat is complete without a side trip to see the huge Hubbard Glacier, and its neighbor, the Turner Glacier. We spent the day making the more than six hour round trip cruise from Yakutat to the glacier. The fog broke as we approached the ice flows. It is not unusual to have clear skies around a glacier (they create their own immediate area atmospheric condition) which is always a plus for good viewing.

Other than two cruise ships, we were on our own along the almost 11 miles of tidewater glaciers fronting the fjord. There was not as much major calving of large icebergs as previous years, although the Hubbard advances as much as 100' per day. The current flowing in front of the glacier from the adjacent Russell Fjord was calm enough to allow us to sit comfortably and observe the glacier up close. Before we departed, we motored even closer in the slack tide for a final viewing. On our way back to Yakutat, Carl had to slowly pick his way through a



congested patch of smaller icebergs (some with mother seals with pups), but surprisingly we passed up the *Vision of the Seas* which with less maneuverability was moving through the ice at dead slow. We never thought we would serve as an icebreaker for a large cruise ship!



Icy Bay

We enjoyed an easy day traveling the 65 miles to Icy Bay, our next refuge from the sometimes rough Gulf of Alaska. There is an active logging operation in this bay which included a log transport ship loaded and ready for departure for Japan. We took advantage of the clear evening to go explore the bay in the jet boat. Mount St. Elias (18,000'), clustered with several other snowcapped peaks sparkling above us in the sun. The range of mountains visible here forms the US/Canada border. To our Seattle friends, picture 12 Mt. Rainiers standing side by side. We stopped by the nearby tug and log boom near our anchorage to chat with one

of the loggers, and gather the local gossip.

The next day, we visited the Yahtse Glacier, swerving madly among many icebergs, both large and small, to get close to the face. It should have been about 15 miles, but the route through the ice flows probably made it closer to 18 miles. Because of the way the bergs were situated, we only had to slow down and nudge our way through the ice on two occasions. The German cruise ship *Bremen* was also picking her way through the ice most of the morning. After lunch, we explored the Point Riou spit sheltering Icy Bay, where we followed the tracks of many bear, moose, and other unidentified critters. That's us in the photo with our 'bear sprays' in our hands. A huge eagle's nest near the beach was a surprise, because it was located in a fairly small deciduous tree. In lower latitudes, they are always in the very tallest trees.



Around Cape St. Elias

For the 'big crossing', we got a one-half hour late start at 5 am. Carl's alarm did not go off. There was a very muddy anchor to raise, but thanks to Eddie's help washing it down, we were soon on our way. This stretch is the longest, most grueling part of the trip, and one that certainly keeps most pleasure boats well south of here. The female crew members slept a lot, but did just fine. The guys survived by munching on the chocolate chip cookies baked by Joann the night before. Carl worked on photos and pages for the digital photo album. There wasn't much to see but sea; we were as far as 24 miles off the coast. Other than one large vessel and some albatross that flew over, there were only a few Dall porpoises, and they refused to ride our bow waves. The

midway point between Icy Bay & Cape Hinchinbrook (the entry into Prince William Sound) is Cape St. Elias which has a 500' high pinnacle rock just offshore. It is significant because it approximates the half-way point in the crossing, and also because it can be a

location of turbulent tidal currents unless you remain well offshore, as we learned during our first crossing in 1994.

Later, we heard marine radio conversations between the Cordova Police & a USCG helicopter as they searched for two local missing kayakers (they were never found). We made our anchorage in time to light Shabbat candles before the 11:18 PM sunset. We are now at 60° North Latitude (Seattle is 47° North). It didn't take much coaxing to get an agreement of the crew to end the long day, 183 nautical miles in 18 hours of travel.



Prince William Sound

The boat rocked and rolled all night, so we relocated the next morning to a nearby sheltered bay. We had a visit from a couple of US Forest Service employees, and they weren't checking for our fishing licenses. One fellow described himself as the "Butt King" because he recently caught a 225 lb. Halibut. We hiked around a couple of small bays that showed clear signs of the major uplift of ground from the 1964 earthquake. On one of the beaches, we spoke to a different group of researchers and learned more about black

oystercatchers and their nesting habits. They were conducting a post Exxon oil spill population recovery study. We saw quite a few oystercatchers on the beach herding their young. As we approached, the babies were running amok, peeping their fuzzy little heads off.

We also visited Constantine Harbor to look for sea otters, and we were not disappointed. One large male in particular wasn't fazed by us in the least, and he let us close enough to get some great photographs. In the inner harbor, we found a raft of otters that included an otter nursery, with many mothers with their little ones on their chests. During this recovery day, Loretta completed a beautiful watercolor painting of the area in which we had anchored.



The next day, we traveled across Prince William Sound to Knight Island. Carl read about a scenic anchorage called Snug Harbor, so we thought we would give it a try. It lived up to its billing, with ragged peaks on three sides and numerous waterfalls from the snowfields above. The water was extremely clear and inhabited by large quantities of lion's mane jellyfish, the only variety in the North Pacific that can cause a nasty rash if touched. We saw abundant marine wildlife, even though most of this bay was heavily oiled by the Exxon Valdez oil spill twelve years ago. With the kayaks, we were able to take in the natural beauty that surrounded us at every turn.



On our final day in the wild, we selected our next destination to be Disk Island at the north end of Knight Island. We circled in from the south and traveled up Knight Island Passage, where we came across more Dall porpoises and our first orca whale of the season. Using our kayaks, we paddled over to a relatively easy walk to the top of a nearby knoll crossing over peatland bogs. The spongy but dry ground was filled with a variety of miniature wildflowers, stunted Sitka spruces and wild lily ponds.

We are now taking a two week break, leaving the boat in

Cordova and returning home. It may be hard to top what we've seen so far when we return, but there is lots of wilderness left to explore.