

2008 Alaska Cruise Journal # 3



Return to Ketchikan

Since the famous “Bridge to Nowhere” is not going to be built (at least for now), transportation from the island on which the Ketchikan Airport sits is by the airport ferry, which carries taxi, shuttle, and foot traffic. The only other alternatives are private boat or water taxi. We chose the latter since it would deliver us direct to the *Inside Passage*. Our crewmembers for the next two weeks are

Avery and Kathleen Loy of Vancouver, Washington. The Loyes are our neighbors on Maui. The *Inside Passage* was moored at the City Dock adjacent to the newly improved cruise ship docks and very near Tongass Trading our favorite resource for most anything we need in Southeast Alaska. Across from our vessel was the *Aleutian Ballad* (photo). Describing itself as a Bering Sea Crab Fisherman’s Tour, this new tourist attraction was apparently inspired by the popularity of the Discovery Channel’s hit show *Deadliest Catch*. Interestingly, the Loyes have a connection to this ship. Their daughter-in-law Stacey created the logo and her uncle owns the boat and conducts the tours. They had been told to look for the *Aleutian Ballad*, but had not anticipated that it would be one of their first sights.

New Eddystone Rock

Departing Ketchikan, we chose to head south to circumnavigate Revillagigedo Island, on which Ketchikan is located, via the Behm Canal. One of the scenic highlights along Behm Canal is New Eddystone Rock, (photo). a 230-foot high shaft of rock rising from a sand



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shoal in the middle of the deep waterway. While in the vicinity of the rock, we were entertained for 45 minutes by an active pod of orcas. We viewed not only this group of three but others as well feeding in the vicinity.

Rudyard Bay Our first major destination was the Misty Fjords National Monument, an area established in 1978 that encompasses 2.2 million acres of unspoiled wilderness. The rains, which had returned to Alaska along with us, persisted throughout this enormous area that is known for its annual rainfall of 150 inches. It is a dramatic landscape of steep 3,000-foot sheer cliffs, which with all the recent rains was laced with waterfalls careening directly into the sea (**photo**). We cruised past the steep cliffs of Punchbowl Cove

through a narrow passageway into Rudyard Bay where we anchored for the night as far into the monument as our vessel could navigate. We lowered the shore boat to investigate the river that flowed into the bay and studied the meadows looking for waterfowl and other wildlife.

Newly Emancipated & Hungry

Approaching the river entrance, Carl spotted a young brown bear swimming across the river to a thick grass and wildflowers covered meadow on the river's delta. It was obvious this cub was newly emancipated from its mother. As quietly as possible, we motored close to this small bear feeding on the sedge grass. Turning off the engine, we sat and watched only twenty feet away at times. The bear did not seem to mind our presence, but stood on its hind legs periodically to sniff the air and watch for larger bears (**photo**). Cameras snapped continuously each time the bear lifted itself from its dinner.

Kasaan Leaving Rudyard, we ventured around the north end of Behm Canal to the head of the trail that leads to Bailey Bay Hot Springs. Because of the persistent rain, we passed on making the hike up to the hot springs and stayed onboard and



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read and visited instead. Studying various maps and guidebooks, our next stop was Kasaan on Prince of Wales Island. There are two Kasaans on this Island, Old Kasaan and New Kasaan. We chose to visit the new Kasaan first having read that there was a display of newer totem poles. It has a current population of approximately 40 with very limited services beyond a school and community building. Walking into town from the village floats, we met a village elder

who told us of the half mile walk that would take us to the historical longhouse and totems. It was an easy pleasant walk on the spongy floor of the forest that lined the shoreline. The longhouse (**photo**) was in a state of disrepair with numerous rotted floorboards, but had an authenticity beyond what we have seen elsewhere. In the center of the roof, there is a large opening through which the smoke can exit from the fire pit in the center. Around the exterior, there were totems of several sizes including one of a bear (**photo**) and another of an orca.

Karta Bay Wilderness Trail In Southeast Alaska, hikes through the woods are very difficult without trails, of which there are very few. Our maps showed a forest service cabin with a well-marked trail along a river

leading to Salmon Lake at the head of Kasaan Bay. Enjoying a well-deserved break from the rain, we located the trail, and our group thoroughly enjoyed a nice long walk in the rainforest (**photo**). About half way, we came across a metal fish weir stretched across the river for tabulating the number of fish returning to spawn.



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The salmon had not yet begun to spawn in this location, but this beautiful river seemed an ideal habitat.

Old Kasaan Before departing Ketchikan, we had visited the Totem Heritage Center. The museum houses a price-less collection of 19th century totem poles and other carvings that were retrieved in the 1970s by Tlingit Indians from the abandoned villages in the general area. Old Kasaan was the native village that was the source of most of the totem poles we had seen in the Totem Heritage Center museum. The original Kasaan was abandoned at the turn of the twentieth century. Our curiosity was peaked to see if we could find any remains of the old village after almost 100 years. We kayaked to shore where we spotted a row of ancient poles mixed in the trees. There were the remains of eight memorial poles in a row (**photo**). A few still had a single crest at the top. This type of totem is usually raised about a year after the death of a chief or someone of importance. Beyond these solitary poles we found no evidence of previous human habitation.

