

2011 Alaska Cruise Journal # 1



Getting a Head Start

We started our 27th consecutive summer cruise departing from Sitka, Alaska (Lat/Lon: 57.03.450 N, 135 21.242 W). Captain Lance, making his 18th delivery over the past 20 years, positioned the *Inside Passage* for us so we could spend more time in the further reaches of maritime Alaska.

One of the most essential pieces of equipment on our boat is the auto-pilot. Near the end of the delivery, the auto-pilot had starting acting erratically

and we were concerned. A few changes in the settings seemed to solve the problem and it has been working fine since.

Our “Techie” Crew Our traveling companions for the first two weeks are repeat crew members and Maui neighbors, Avery and Kathleen Loy. Avid photographers and world travelers, they enjoy our alternative existence touring Alaska.

As much as we travel to remote Alaska destinations and at times rarely see other boats or signs of civilization, we are attuned to maintaining an electronic connection with the world. We still have a great urge to stay wired for both personal and business reasons as well as for just keeping abreast with events taking place all over the world.

Since Avery and Kathleen are experts on the use of iPads and because Carl and Joann have had theirs for about a week, this first leg of the voyage will be one of training and trying to connect to the internet from our remote locations. We suspect the **photo** above taken at the dock in Yakutat would bring a smile to Steve Jobs’ face.

Heading out of Sitka we had the choice of going inside through Peril Strait or outside into the Gulf of Alaska. We chose the latter since it is more scenic. It also allowed us a better chance for more immediate viewing of eagles (**photo**), sea otters,



2011 Alaska Cruise Journal # 1



orcas, sea lions, and other marine life. Our first night was spent in a small cove off of the entrance to Khaz Bay (57 33.125 N, 136 04.044 W). Remote, secluded, and beautiful, it was a great beginning to the summer. Carl and Kathleen ended the day kayaking out to ride the surging ocean swells that wrapped into the entrance of our anchorage.

Elfin Cove This unincorporated village gave us a taste of quirky Alaska. Joanne, the general store proprietress, told us that by December each year, only about ten residents remain in this tiny boardwalk fishing community from a peak of about one hundred during the fishing season.

Our first encounter was with Matt who lived aboard his salmon troller. He attempted to make space on the limited dock for us to moor, even offering us his space, but there was no way the *Inside Passage* would fit. After securing elsewhere, we wanted to show our appreciation by bringing Matt a bottle of wine. He proved to be quite a non-stop talker, and appropriately his vessel is named *Kibitzer*. Matt insisted that he couldn't accept anything without reciprocating. In return, we accepted a jar of his smoked wild king salmon that he had caught (**photo**).

Derelicts After our vessel proved to be much too long for the available space on the main dock, we inched our way through the narrow and shallow entrance into the Elfin Cove inner harbor (58 11.582 N, 136 20.710 W). We would not be able to leave until the following afternoon's high tide, but the village and its residents were worth exploring in detail.

Our dock-mate in the inner harbor was Hunter, who we discovered actually lived aboard two different boats engulfed with tarps and various sheets of plastic that on first glance had appeared abandoned (**photo**). Hunter was a colorful character who gave us an interesting back story although we can't be sure how much of it was true. Note his two different shoes. When we inquired at the store, we learned that Elfin Cove hosted a few of what the



2011 Alaska Cruise Journal # 1

locals refer to as “derelicts”. Moorage is free, and Hunter and his vessel were described as having just “drifted in” a couple of years ago.



Off into the Gulf of Alaska Rounding Cape Spencer (at which point our insurance company doubles the deductible of the *Inside Passage*'s insurance policy), we headed out into the Gulf of Alaska pausing initially at Graves Rocks to view the Stellar sea lions ([58 14.343 N, 136 45.561 W](#)). The large bulls (often three times the size of the females) stake out positions of dominance on these wind swept and surf drenched slabs of granite (**photo**). That night, we anchored and kayaked in nearby Torch Bay, just out of reach of the ocean swells ([58 19.442 N, 136 47.678 W](#)).

Nonstop to Yakutat Weather and sea conditions are monitored closely before we venture out into the Gulf of Alaska. We had to make a 140 mile run to Yakutat with no alternative choices if the weather turned against us. Fortunately, the weather gods have looked favorably on us so far this year. As we cruised, we enjoyed the Fairweather mountain range with its many glaciers and snow-capped peaks including the La Perouse glacier which comes down to and discharges ice directly into the Pacific Ocean ([58 27.029 N, 137 18.294 W](#)).



2011 Alaska Cruise Journal # 1

Yakutat, the only community on the West coast between Sitka and Cordova, was a welcome sight at the end of a long day (59 33.857 N, 139 44.463 W). A spread out community of around 900, the town has no central core. We took a long walk after dinner, and can now certify that there are at least 20 Wi-Fi enabled routers in Yakutat, all of which are protected from wandering iPhones and iPads.

Inquiring about internet access at the local tavern, we were told the closest location was the Glacier Bear Lodge. Kathleen asked if it was within walking distance and a vocal local yokel commented that it was a long walk unless you chose to ride one of the many bears along the way. His efforts to intimidate the visitors were not successful as Kathleen replied saying that would work if there was a saddle and bridle available.

Taking the next day off from cruising, we ventured down Disenchantment Bay to watch and hear the Hubbard Glacier advancing and calving huge pillars of ice (59 59.564 N, 139 30.389 W). Enroute, it was



essential to weave our way between various sized bergs, some filled with black-legged kittiwakes that flew off in interesting patterns as we approached (**photo on previous page**). Many of the pinnacles looked poised to collapse. We each had competing opinions of which ice pillars would be the next to fall into the water (**photo**).

More next week...