

2012 Alaska Cruise Journal # 2



Excursion Inlet Ocean Beauty Seafood Company, the latest of many companies since 1908, is now operating this historic cannery located off Icy Straits near Glacier Bay (58 25.271 N, 135 26.899 W). A recent addition to the many bunk houses near the transient dock was a museum filled with artifacts of the history at this site. During World War II, this location was taken over to become a military staging operation in preparation for the recovery of the islands occupied by the Japanese at the far end of the Aleutian island chain.

By the time construction was completed in late 1943, the Japanese threat was minimized and the base ultimately served as a German prisoner of war camp. Unique among 400 such POW camps in the United States, it had no fences since the surrounding mountain wilderness

eliminated any possibility of a successful escape.

There was a small crew scrubbing down the salmon processing equipment for the opening date, which was scheduled to begin around the 4th of July. We walked around trying not to be in the way of the many fork-lift trucks moving supplies and wandered over to the airstrip where we posed for photos in the open-air waiting room of this unusual airport (**photo**).

A Shore Excursion: That evening in Sawmill Bay (58 28.336 N, 135 29.798 W), a peaceful anchorage located just inside the boundaries of Glacier Bay National Park, we went ashore for a bonfire and to roast S'mores which consist of marshmallow, chocolate bars, and graham crackers heated over an open flame.

The wet conditions and damp wood presented a real problem for our crew, but after a persistent half-hour effort, a fire finally took hold (**photo**). With clothes reeking of smoke, we returned to the *Inside Passage* to watch a movie in serene conditions. With snow-capped mountains on all sides, we watched a fully-grown black bear wandering the nearby beach.



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A Whale of a Show At the east end of Icy Straits at the head of Idaho Inlet, we caught an unusual sight in perfect conditions. Amongst much wildlife that included other whales, Stellar sea lions, and sea otters, there was one humpback that caught our immediate attention. We saw it breaching repetitively for almost a half-hour (**photo**).

Halibut Heaven Fishing went well at a nearby location. Everyone involved caught a few while returning the small ones back for further growth. Within five minutes of each other, Brad and Nick each caught a nice halibut of around ten pounds. They helped each other net their fish (**photo**) and did a great job of learning how to clean them. The filleting process was quite hectic for a while but our younger crewmembers had big smiles once the job was completed. The boys have been a big help with many other tasks onboard as well.

During the cleaning process, Carl took a break to go kayaking and photographed a brown bear grazing in the onshore meadow. The sunny

evening inspired us to eat on the top deck, although the breeze made it cooler than we anticipated.

Overnight in Haines We retraced our route, this time heading east into Lynn Canal. First explored by Captain Vancouver in 1794, this 90 mile long inlet has snow-capped mountains on both sides. Pleasant weather conditions made it a treat to view the scenic splendor.

Like Skagway, Haines (59 13.987 N, 135 26.399 W) is a rarity in the Inside Passage because it is connected to the Al-Can Highway system. The former site of the turn of the century Fort William H. Seward, boasts a snowy backdrop of the 6,500 foot high Cathedral Peaks. A charming and



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friendly community with a population of about 2,500, Haines gets a limited number of cruise ships. Haines recently won a national award for the best small public library.

Golf in Alaska? Brad found out Haines has one of the few golf courses in Alaska and took it on himself to schedule a tee time and order a taxi. After dinner our four guests went to play a 9-hole round of golf. Only in Alaska, would it be possible to see others starting a round at 9:30 p.m. and play on greens made of sheets of Astroturf stitched together (photo).

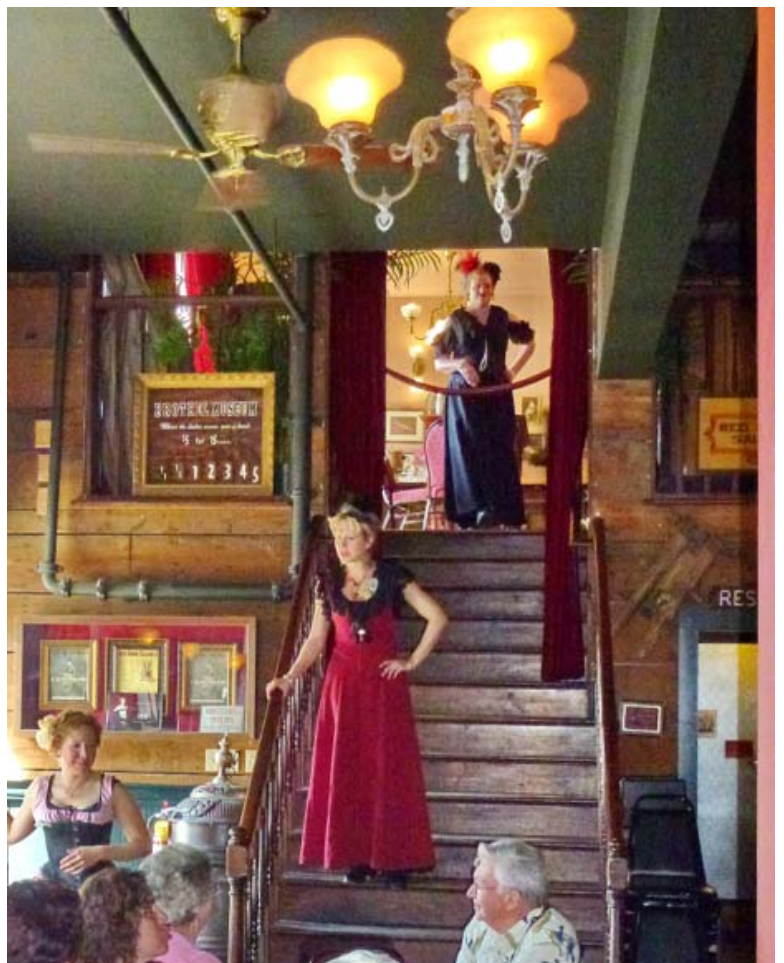
The mountain backdrop and Chilkat River nearby offset the challenging conditions where the rough was a foot high. Losing over half of their golf balls in the first three holes, the group was able to partially resupply with range balls and finish the round to end a beautiful sunny day.

encountered unusually hot weather and sunny skies including most all of our visit to Skagway ([59 26.996 N, 136 19.249 W](#)). One small cafe in town had a sign stating that it was closed because it was the first sunny day and “much too nice to open”.

Originally used as a native access point to the interior, Skagway became famous during the two year Klondike Gold Rush that began in 1897. With a permanent population of fewer than 900, the town hosts almost a million visitors per season.

For lunch, we settled on the Red Onion Saloon that reportedly was known during the Gold Rush as the best saloon/bordello in town. Tours of the upstairs ladies “cribs” are given on the hour for \$5 for 15 minutes, the same charge as in 1898 but with different expected results (photo).

We poked into some of the stores along Broadway, Skagway’s main street on our way to the Skagway Outlet Store (S.O.S.) where we connected with Carl’s high school friend Dennis Corrington. Dennis and his wife Nancy have operated numerous retail stores during the tourist season in Skagway since the 1970s. One of their latest ventures is a Knife and Ulu store. The Ulu is a curved knife used by Eskimos.



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During the visit, Dennis took the time to explain the origins and age of the large mammoth tusk on display (photo).

As always, we enjoyed a nice visit with Dennis and Nancy who loaned us their van to tour the location of Dyea, Skagway's sister city during the gold rush.

Dropping off our crew in Juneau, we concluded the first leg of the trip.