

2015 Alaska Cruise Journal # 6



Kodiak and Beyond Jim and Judy Heber of Bellevue, Washington, joined us for the final leg of our 2015 cruise (photo).

After visiting Kodiak's well-stocked Safeway we departed via Woman's Bay (57 44.104 N, 152 30.456 W) to see the largest U.S. Coast Guard base on the West Coast. It houses roughly half of the 6,000 people who call Kodiak their home.

Carl watches the reality program *Coast Guard Alaska* on the Weather Channel. Cameras record the actions of these brave

and experienced seamen as they rescue people in distress in remote parts of Alaska, often hoisting them by cable to a hovering helicopter. From there we traveled back north through Kupreanof Strait and then a bit south to spend the evening in Uganik Bay (57 48.580 N, 153 15.960 W) where we were blessed with our view of the best sunset of the summer (photo).



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Final Visit To The Alaska Peninsula Our early morning departure took us back across Shelikof Strait for our final visit to Geographic Harbor (58 06.920 N, 152 36.400 W).

We wanted as many of our guests this season to have the special experience this anchorage provided. Katmai National Park has the largest population of protected brown bears in the world and is the national park with the fewest visitors.

As the summer salmon season progressed, more of the coastal brown bears arrived. They came to fish the stream as greater numbers of pink salmon arrived, but periodically some just sat and watched (photo).

Completing A Chore The following morning we woke to

a pea-soup fog that engulfed the inlet. It provided the perfect time for Carl and Jim to do the periodic oil change on three engines which involved almost 22 gallons of oil.

After the fog cleared we kayaked to a landing at the far side of the tide flats to get better access to the streams where the bears were feeding.

Stranded Octopus As we walked along the shore we came across a beached Pacific octopus, the largest species found anywhere (photo). A full-grown



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specimen may weigh almost 100 pounds. It appeared to still be alive, but its survival would depend on how soon the tide came in and whether it was discovered by a bear or eagle.

Life in the wilderness is eat or be eaten except for bears whose position at the top of the food chain is such that other than humans, they have only other bears to fear.

Summer Romance We have read about but had never seen the courting ritual of bears. Usually this takes place between May and July and lasts for up to two and one-half weeks.



We watched while a large chocolate brown boar and a much smaller and lighter colored sow were playfully interacting. It almost looked like they were talking to each other (photo). We were told that they had been seen by others lying together and snuggling.



An Interesting Background We enjoyed visiting with Tess, an intern working with the Katmai National Park Service rangers for the summer. She will return to college as a junior this fall in Anchorage majoring in marine biology (photo).

Tess explained that her father was Eskimo and her mother was Californian. Although technically Californian may not be a type of ethnicity, it seemed to be a functionally accurate method of description.

Tess grew up in Igiugig, a very small village of around 200 where the waters of Lake Iliamna enter the Kvichak River (59 19.000 N, 155 53.000 W). Igiugig means “rushing water at the mouth” in her native language.

She is the product of a K through 12 school of 17 students where she ranked first in her graduating class. Yes...she was the only one in her graduating class, but it was clear to us that she will be successful in her chosen career.

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Bushwhacking We ended the week with a hike in Kukak Bay (*58 17.656 N, 154 15.722 W*). Although this area has few large trees, the hillsides are covered with wildflowers and a dense thicket of scrub alders and dwarf willows that make progress difficult. The only trails to be seen were those made by the resident bears. Over time, they create paths where each step is repeated and worn into the muskeg. The view of mountains and glaciers to the north made the bushwhacking worthwhile (**photo**).

