

2017 Alaska Cruise Journal # 8



Nearing The End With only one week remaining in this summer's cruise, we looked forward to potential further highlights ahead.

We traded crewmembers in Homer, Alaska which is located at "the end of the road" on the Kenai Peninsula. (59 36.212 N, 151 25.319 W).

Our final guests were Richard and Janice Michalsen from the Los Angeles area (photo). A native of Alaska, Richard grew up in Ketchikan. Janice was fully prepared for the voyage having been briefed by her brother Bill Faia, a

frequent previous crew member.

Snoozing Sea Otter We found a couple of resident sea otters asleep floating in the calm harbor waters. They were quite surprised when they woke, having been oblivious to our presence.

We researched sea otter routines and learned that they usually begin diving for food an hour after sunrise. Ravenous feeding and grooming activity reaches a peak between 6:00 and 8:00 A.M.

Around midday comes a lull while the animals sleep or doze lying on their backs (photo). Later in the afternoon a second bout of diving and grooming gets underway



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often using tools (rocks) to open the clam or crab shell. They typically spend 50-60 percent of their day looking for food.

A Weather Break We cruised along the southern side of the Kenai Peninsula to Thunder Bay, a scenic inlet sporting high mountains on all sides, multiple active waterfalls, and patches of remaining snowfields (60 11.582 N, 136 20.710 W). After a few days, the rains subsided and the sun shone brightly for our first paddle together (**photo**). Other than the gnats that buzzed around us, it was a perfect opportunity and a wonderful afternoon for exploration.

Puffins A bonus of visiting the Kenai Fjords region is the Chiswell Islands (59 34.842 N, 150 10.725 W) that are home to eighteen different species of seabirds, including thousands of puffins (**photo**). Puffins only come in from the open



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sea when they are nesting in soil burrows in sea cliffs during the summer months. Puffins have always been difficult to photograph, so this opportunity was special for us.

Once More With Ice On one of our last evenings of the cruise, we anchored in Heather Bay close to one of the former terminal moraines of the Columbia Glacier (*60 59.755 N, 147 01.001 W*). The face of this large tidewater glacier has since retreated off our nautical charts, which makes a closer visit impossible since we don't know the bottom conditions that aren't mapped. At high tide we crossed over the shallow strip and explored some of the grounded icebergs as the *Inside Passage* sat in the background (**photo**). Although it was raining lightly, it was an experience that none of the crew wanted to miss.



Final Summer Thoughts Reflecting on the many highlights of this year's Alaskan cruise, we are filled with wonderful memorable experiences, both with all of the crew we had and the bounty of wildlife we were fortunate to enjoy. As we edit our many photos and videos this winter, we will relive these experiences again and again.