

2020 Columbia & Snake River Cruise Journal # 2



Cruising Eastward

Previous guests Lonnie and Susan Edelheit (*photo*) joined us in Portland to help the exploration of the Columbia and Snake Rivers. They were last minute replacements for other friends who concluded they should remain at home until pandemic conditions improved.

Basalt Columns There are many commercial facilities along this vast river. Long barges pushed by tow boats were a common sight carrying wood pulp, logs, and grain. The shorelines of both states

were lined with railroad tracks, and large trains came by at least once per hour.

The Burlington Northern follows the Washington shoreline with Union Pacific on the Oregon side, the latter of which had 171 cars in one assemblage. Commerce appears to be booming in this area. We passed many shorelines of magnificent basalt cliffs often with waterfalls in their deep crevices (*photo*).

Our first locking was through the large Bonneville Dam, which is forty miles east of Portland and was built from 1934 through 1943. It is one of the world's largest hydroelectric



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systems. The lock steward took a long time to acknowledge us but eventually we entered and tied up to one large mid-ship bollard (*photo*). The lock filling process takes about a half hour ([45 38.220 N, 121 56.915 W](#)).

Local Knowledge As we approached Hood River, Oregon ([45 43.441 N, 121 32.684 W](#)), we contacted Dr. Jodi Reiter-Ready and her husband Vince Ready, friends from Seattle.

Avid windsurfers, they had moved to the area eleven years ago. Vince, who is a professional

photographer, offered to take a picture of the Inside Passage as we passed 500' below their cliff side home which overlooks the river (*photo*).

After we moored in the local marina, they, along with their two teenage children, came to visit us and to share their local knowledge of the area.

A Mecca for Wind & Kite Surfing The entire Columbia River gorge is a popular water sports area but the Hood River locale is known as the windsurfing capital of the world. It is located at the panoramic crossroads of the river and the Cascade Mountain Range.

As we carefully motored past hundreds of these skilled athletes, we felt as if we were engulfed in



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a carnival of shapes, people and colors. They cut in front of and behind us (photo). Wind surfing using a hydrofoil under the board requires advanced skills, but we saw many as we passed (photo).

The Dalles Lock and Dam The site of the town The Dalles has been occupied for 10,000 years, making it the oldest known continuous human settlement along the Columbia River ([45 36.915 N, 121 08.341 W](#)).

The Lewis & Clark

expedition camped here in 1805 both heading west and then later east. Prior to arriving in town, we passed three large but curious structures that had mega power sources and cooling structures. Carl guessed they might be computer data centers. We later confirmed they belonged to Google.

The Dalles Dam boasted concrete-gravity locks that lifted us 90 feet, which was 20 feet over the raise at the Bonneville locks.

A result of the dams is that the river, in this case Lake Celilo, becomes a lake on the upstream side. Celilo Falls, which is approximately 13 miles upstream and a historic native fishing area, disappeared beneath the rising waters within hours.



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We repeated the system tying up to one of the large bollards that slowly rise up the concrete sides of the huge locks. The winds along this stretch were often over 30 miles per hour which added additional challenges to the locking procedures.

John Day Lock & Dam This dam has the distinction of highest lift of any lock and raised us 113 feet while creating Lake Umatilla behind it. As we approached the locks, it looked like we were going to be entering a cave (*photo*).

The dam was completed in 1971 and was named after John Day who was a Virginia fur trapper and a partner of John Jacob Astor's Pacific Northwest fur trading company. The John Day Dam is located 216 miles upriver from the mouth of the Columbia River ([45 43.12 N, 120 41.915 W](#)).

The downstream closure is known as a "guillotine gate" (*photos on this and the next page*).

Umatilla, Oregon
Our fourth and last dam along the



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Columbia River is the McNary Dam. It was put into hydroelectric service in 1953 and has a vessel lift of 75 feet.

By this point, we had figured out the subtleties of the locking process, and felt quite comfortable as we approached each new dam.

Beyond the McNary Dam, we found ourselves in an arid high desert, which at first looked unproductive. However, the combination of Columbia River water for irrigation with the area's abundant sunshine has turned the region into an economic bread basket.

At this time of the year, the grain silos were so filled that we saw large mountains of golden grain piled outside (*photo*).

Kennewick was our original destination, as it is the end of the navigable river for boats our size. However, before heading downstream we have time to visit at least a portion of the Snake River and will include that report in our next journal.

