

ALASKA 2019

This is the first in a new series of trip stories. The software we have used to create our website is being discontinued, so this and future stories will be e-mailed only to friends, family, and anyone who requests it. We are sorry about it, but the thought of creating an entire new website with all of our trips is out of the question.

Our original website has the bulk of our travels to all kinds of wonderful places around the world. See them at <http://stevekathytravels.com/>. The story of our 2007 Alaska cruise is there, as well as our trip to the interior of Alaska in 2011.

After a very enjoyable cruise to Hawaii, We decided we would like to take an Alaskan cruise to see Glacier Bay. Kathy has never seen it, and I am also interested, as I have not been there since 1988, and would like to see the effects of global warming.



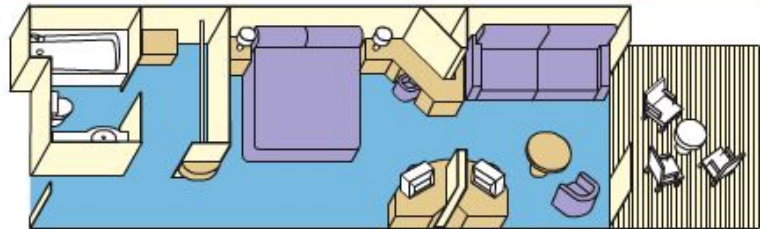
For the first time, we were interested in a suite, rather than a minisuite, and the \$1600 per person difference did not dissuade us. Since we are traveling less, it will fit in our budget, Our travel agent worked her magic, and found us the last available suite in a good location on the starboard side of the ship.

The main thing is that we will leave from and arrive back in Los Angeles-No airports! The fare may be more expensive than the shorter cruises leaving from Seattle, but the costs are lessened because we will not have to pay for airfare. Plus, we will be pampered for those extra days at sea.

Suite 533 Sq Ft



Mini suite 323 Sq Ft



As you can see, the suite is much larger, and has a huge balcony. It even has a wet bar! One great thing is a curtain that can divide the two rooms. This is handy if one of us gets up earlier than the other or one of us wants to nap.

The bathroom also has two entrances, one from each room.

Since we are now "Elite" passengers on Princess, we get free laundry service as one of the perks! This means that we can bring fewer clothes and just have them laundered. We also get a bar setup of 8 miniatures plus some mixers. We get them exchanged for gin and brandy, as no rum was available.

Princess has designated our suite as a “Club Class”. We experienced “Club Class” on our 2018 Hawaii cruise, and really enjoyed it. No waiting to be seated, the same wait staffs each night, and an extra entrée on the menu.

Speaking of menus, someone on Cruise Critic posted menus from the cruise they just took on the same ship. They look great, and the meals were seasoned much better than on previous cruises.

WEATHER

Our biggest concern was the weather. When I took an Alaskan cruise in 1988, it rained every day except one. We tracked the 10 day forecast for all ports, and we saw a gradual clearing trend.

We were so lucky that we had bright sunny days in all of our ports. We apparently hit a window of good weather, as it is raining there the day after we returned.

NORTH TO ALASKA

The sea was a little rough northbound, as we were heading into the swells. However, we were out on our balcony, and saw something amazing! We have seen many rainbows in our lives, including a double rainbow on Kauai, but have never seen one that arcs completely from end to end. We believed rainbows are a good omen, and were glad to see it.

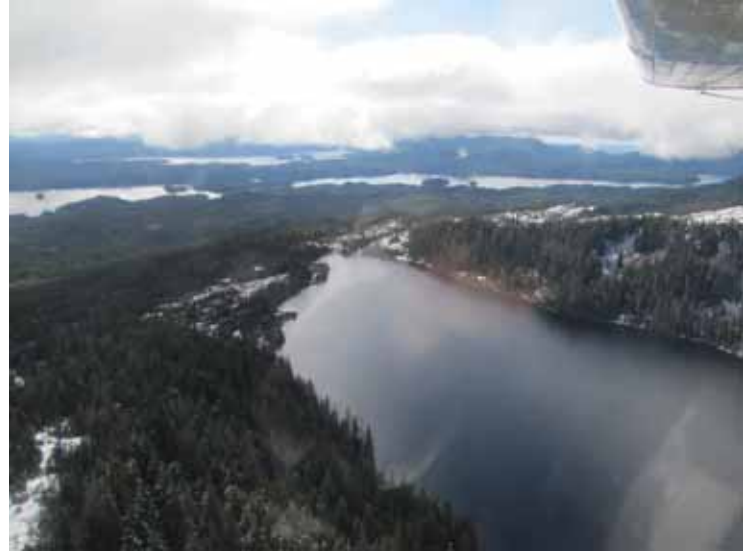


KETCHIKAN

Coming into Ketchikan, we saw the most unusual sight. We called it a “jetway” for seaplanes, apparently a long tube from the terminal to the dock to protect passengers during winter. We also saw a number of seaplanes docked near us. Hopefully, I can take a flight in one over Misty Fjord.



I saw a booth on the dock near the ship offering flights over Misty Fjord by. When I was here in 1988, it was so cloudy you could not see anything. This time the weather was clear and I got some great photos. Kathy was thrilled that that I got fly over Misty Fjord while she enjoyed the morning on board the ship. We first crossed George and Carroll Inlets



From there we crossed Mirror Lake. Unfortunately, I was in the copilot seat, and got some reflections in the photos. The right hand photo is NOT upside down, but the reflection in the lake.



In many places, we flew through notches in the mountains, attesting to the skill of our pilot. We then flew across the Behm Canal to the Rudyerd Inlet, where we landed and changed passenger seating. I was happy to be in the back as I had a big bubble window to shoot through.

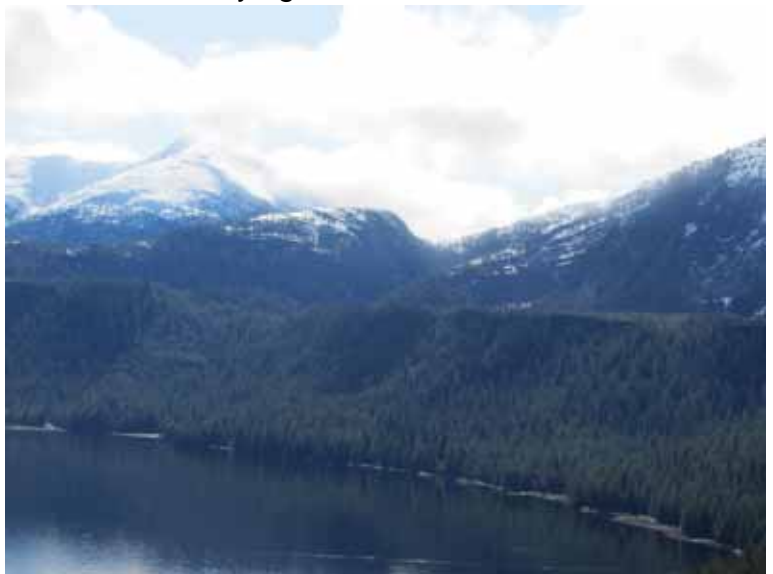




I even found a little waterfall running into the inlet.



As you can see, the cloud bases were about 4,000 feet, and we were flying about 500 feet below them.



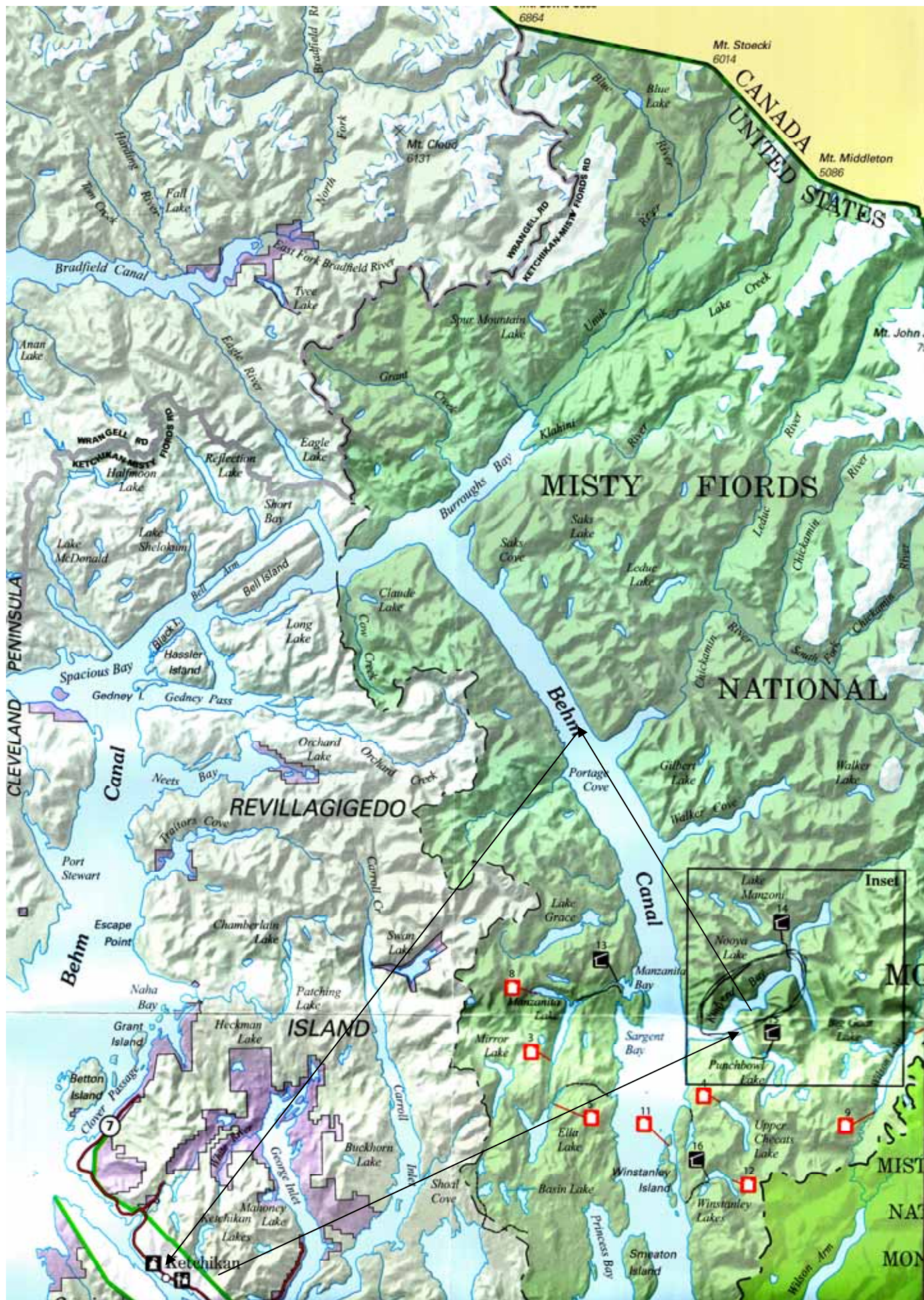
We then flew back across the Behm Canal, and passed over New Eddystone Island. This island was formed by magma pushing up through cracks of the earth and solidifying. It was named that by Capt Vancouver as it resembled the Eddystone lighthouse off the south coast of England. A picture of the English lighthouse is below



We then flew back across the Carroll and George Inlets on the way back to Ketchikan. It was a fantastic experience and I was glad I finally got to see Misty Fjord.



The next page is a map of Misty Fjords, with the arrows indicating our flight path.



In the afternoon we went to a lumberjack show that was very entertaining. There was a program on one of the TV channels on the ship about the man who started the show. Rather than just having lumberjack demonstrations, he made it a challenge between American and Canadian lumberjacks, which made it a lot more interesting.

The audience was divided into two groups, one group rooted for the Canadians, and the other group rooted for the Americans.

The first was the underhand chop, where the men stand atop a log and chop below their feet. They then turn around and chop from the other side.



The next event was axe throwing, with a double headed axe.



Following that was the two man buck sawing. It was amazing how fast they cut through the log.



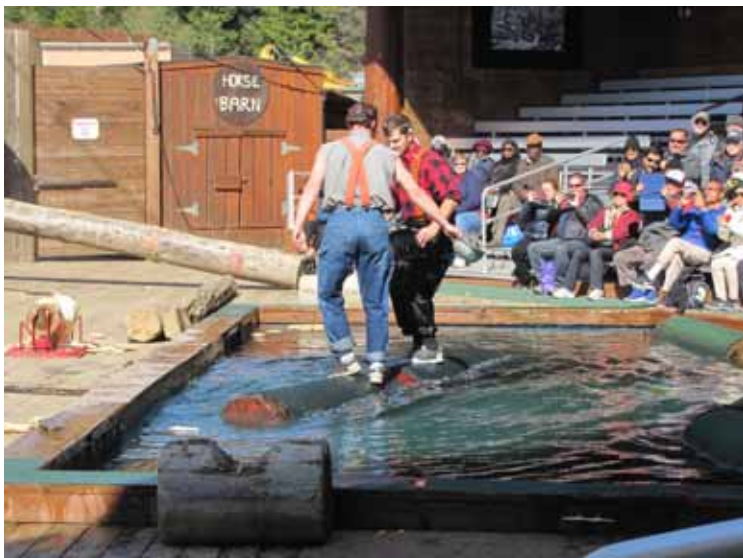
The next event was the springboard, where the men stand on a springboard to chop the wood



The tree climb was really exciting, with both men with climbing spikes on their shoes and a rope



The final event was log rolling, where two men stand on a log and spin it. The object is to dump the other person in the water.



All in all, it was a lot of fun, and the Canadian team won, to the wild cheers of half the audience.

JUNEAU

On coming into port in Juneau, we saw the most amazing sight. The bow thrusters of the ship stirred up the bottom of the dock area, and attracted all kinds of small fish to eat what is stirred up. The fish in turn, attract bald eagles, and we were sitting on our balcony watching dozens of bald eagles diving for the fish. It was unbelievable to see so many at one time.



We wanted to take the tram up to the top of Mt Roberts to get some panoramic views of the area. There are 3 places for the ship to dock, one next to the tram, one far away where a shuttle was available, and one in the middle, which was where we docked. No transportation was available, so we took a taxi to the tram.

The Mount Roberts Tramway ride transported us 1,800 feet above sea level. The sky bridge and numerous viewing platforms offered stunning panoramas and a number of alpine paths with great views. We checked out the Native exhibits, theater, bar and restaurant in the mountaintop lodge. Unfortunately, the Juneau Raptor Center exhibit was being rebuilt.

The restaurant experience was a disaster! We had been viewing their menu on line, and it looked great! However, when we got there all that was offered was a "Spring Menu". No oysters, no king crab legs, etc. Kathy had a fish and chips plate, and I opted for the king crab salad.

When my salad arrived, other than a couple of spindly pieces of king crab, the bulk of the salad was Dungeness crab. I told the poor waiter that I had cleaned many king crab and Dungeness crabs, so I know the difference. He was apologetic and adjusted our bill.

After lunch we got some great scenic shots from the top.



The photo on the right shows a tree avalanche. When the soil can no longer hold the trees, it gives way much the same as snow does and leaves a bare scar on the hill.



SKAGWAY

The most interesting thing to do in Skagway is to take the White Pass and Yukon train up to the Canadian border. We had previously taken the train, but on this cruise the ship offered a VIP car for only 14 people. The overstuffed swiveling leather club chairs were luxurious, instead of the hard wooden benches with 40 people in the other cars we had previously experienced. In addition we were served wine and canapés, which made us feel like real VIP's even though we were not.



We watched as the train pulled in, with our car being right behind the locomotives. The car was then uncoupled from the locomotives so we could go in the opposite direction.



There were all kinds of canapés available, along with beer, wine and soda .It was real a pleasure to be in this car.



The next page is the route map with mileposts (MP) indicated

20.4 WHITE PASS SUMMIT - 2,888FT

Here at the U.S./Canadian border, mounted police waved on stampedeers with a ton of supplies, needed for one year in the north.

19.3 TRAIL OF '98 - 2,730FT

As the train emerges from the tunnel, see visible remains of this famous trail, a primary route from Skagway to the goldfields.

18.8 TUNNEL - 2,715FT

In 1969 this 675-foot tunnel was driven through the mountain and a new bridge was built to replace the steel bridge.

18.6 STEEL BRIDGE - 2,613FT

Constructed in 1901, this was the tallest cantilever bridge in the world. Used until 1969.

17.5 DEAD HORSE GULCH - 2,463FT

3,000 pack animals, victims of neglect by stampedeers and overloading, met their end in the stampede of '98.

17.0 INSPIRATION POINT - 2,413FT

Seventeen miles up into the mountains from Skagway, you'll have an unparalleled view of Lynn Canal, Mt. Harding and the Chilkat Range. Favorite for early photographers.

16.0 TUNNEL MOUNTAIN - 2,275FT

The yawning chasm of Glacier Gorge disappears into Tunnel Mountain, 1,000 feet above the floor of the gulch.

14.0 GLACIER STATION - 1,871FT

Once a stopping place for thirsty steam engines on the uphill grade. Railroad section crew lived here and maintained the railbed.

12.3 HENEY STATION - 1,573FT

Named for Michael J. Heney, WP&YR contractor. Freight was transferred down a steep tramway to waiting packhorses at White Pass City in the valley below to be carried to the Summit.

11.5 BRIDAL VEIL FALLS - 1,334FT

Beautiful waterfall cascades 6,000 feet from the glaciers on Mt. Cleveland and Mt. Clifford.

10.4 BLACK CROSS ROCK - 1,090FT

On August 3, 1898, a blasting accident buried two railroad workers under a 500-ton granite rock. The black cross marks their resting place.

8.8 BUCHANAN ROCK - 849FT

"On to Alaska with Buchanan" has been a sightseeing attraction for over 70 years. The sign on the far wall of the canyon was painted by the Buchanan Boys Tour Group, brought from Detroit each year to visit Skagway, circa 1920-30.

7.3 BRACKETT ROAD

Wagon road was advertised as an "easy" through route across White Pass. The toll was high: 2¢ a pound for freight, \$1 for each horse, \$10 a wagon.

6.9 ROCKY POINT - 637FT

A photo favorite! Excellent view down the lower valley to Skagway, with Mt. Harding and Harding Glacier forming a dramatic backdrop.

5.8 DENVER - 402FT

Crossing the east fork of the Skagway River; nearby Denver Glacier Trail, a favorite local hike, leads to the base of the glacier. The donated WP&YR red caboose "cabin" can be rented through the U.S. Forest Service.

2.5 GOLD RUSH CEMETERY

Resting place for early Skagway residents, Gold Rush gangster Jefferson Randolph "Soapy" Smith and hero Frank Reid, who died in a final shootout.

2.0 SHOPS

The maintenance shops, where the railroad repairs and restores its engines and rolling stock.

0.0 SKAGWAY - SEA LEVEL

From Skagway an army of hopeful gold seekers began the 45-mile trek over White Pass toward the Klondike goldfields.



The viewing platform of our car was very large, and could accommodate 3 people taking pictures on the same side. As we pulled out, we could see another train that would be following us.



MP 6.9 Rocky Point with our ship



MP 8.8 Buchanan Rock



MP 11.5 Bridal Veil Falls



MP 16.0 Tunnel Mountain



MP 16.8 Abandoned Steel Bridge



When we were here in 2007, it was June, and most of the snow had melted. This time, the mountains really stood out, and the snow looked like marshmallow cream in the glorious sunshine.



Kathy (second seat on the right) enjoying the trip



On a rock face across from our ship, are painted the names of cruise ships that have called at Skagway. The big "R" in the center is from the Regent ship we took here in 2007.

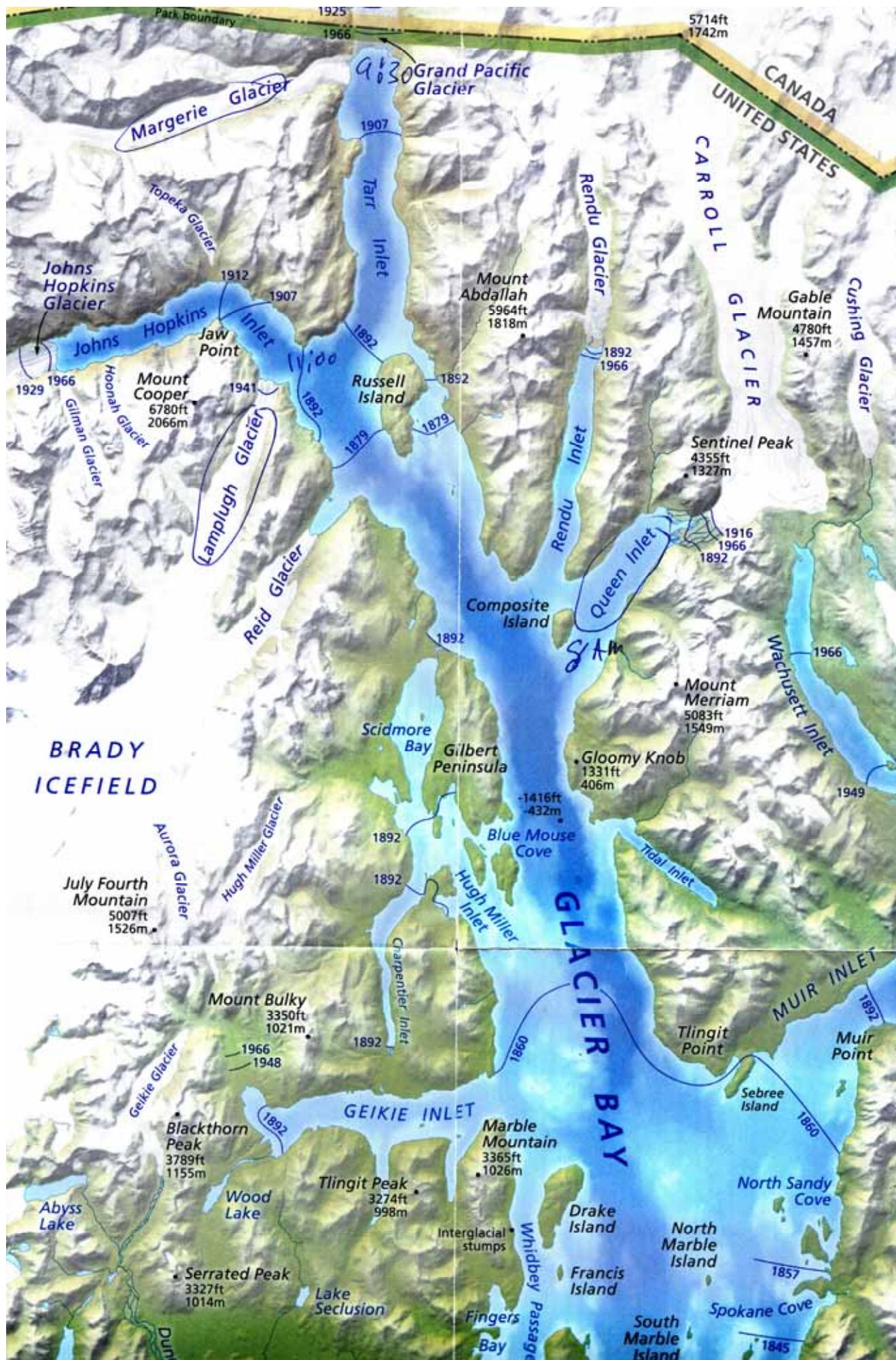


GLACIER BAY

I had not been back to Glacier Bay since 1988, and the difference was astounding.

We learned that the glaciers advance and recede over time. In fact, they have advanced and receded four times over the previous two hundred years.

On the next page is a map of Glacier Bay. The handwritten notes were the times at which the ship would be at each glacier. The lines with the dates on the map show the extent of each glacier at different dates advancing and receding through the years.



The ship had a special offer for Glacier Bay. They had a place called the Sanctuary forward on the top deck. It was fitted out with lounges and blankets arranged in a big semicircle; however it was cold and windy up there. Part of the package was a continental breakfast of coffee and pastries. Later on, Mimosas and Bloody Marys were provided. We got the last two lounges on the port side because the glacier viewing would start there.



When the ship turned around for the starboard people to view the glaciers, we went back to our suite, which was on the starboard side of the ship and sat on our comfortable balcony. The weather was fantastic for our cruise into Glacier Bay. It was bright, sunny, windy and about 54 F.



Our first stop was in Queen Inlet to view the Carroll Glacier



We then proceeded up to the end of Glacier to view the Grand Pacific Glacier. I had seen it in 1988, and was quite surprised at how much it had receded

1988



Present day



Off our port side was the Margerie Glacier, which seemed to be in good shape. We had hoped to see some big chunks break off, but there were just a few small pieces.



We sailed back down Glacier Bay enjoying views of the snow covered mountains



The last glacier we stopped at was the Lamplugh Glacier



All in all, it was a very enjoyable experience, and I was glad to share it with Kathy.

VICTORIA

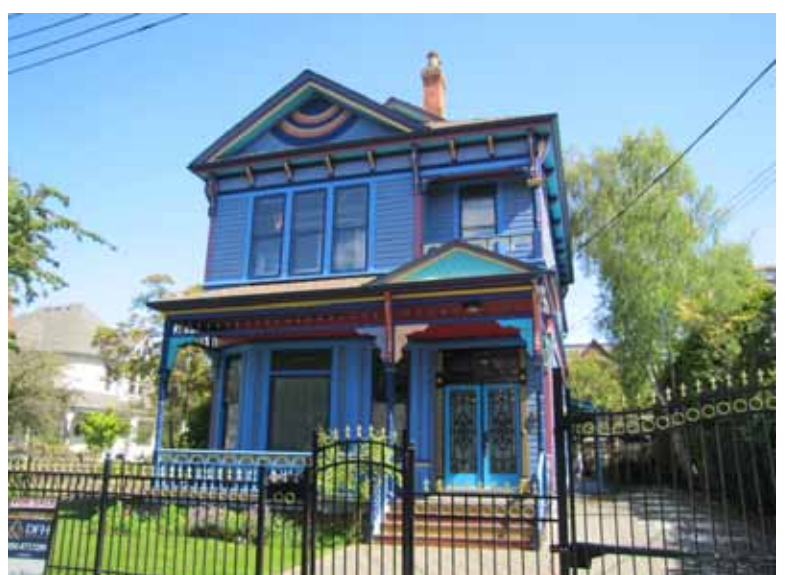
Since Kathy started me enjoying horse drawn carriage rides, we have tried to take them wherever we have gone throughout the world. We found a company called "Tally Ho" which offered these trips. We certainly do not want to go on one of the ship's group gropes with a bunch of other people. We saw a horse drawn trolley with 30 people in it squeezed 3 abreast, as opposed to the two of us alone. We booked a 90 minute "Premier" tour. On our last time in Victoria, we visited the Butchart Gardens, and had High Tea at the Empress Hotel, but we really did not get to see any part of Victoria. This time we saw many beautiful historical refurbished homes in the lovely neighborhoods.



We passed through many fields of lupine, and stopped to view the world's tallest totem pole.



We passed by a number of these homes that had been declared “heritage homes” with a small plaque.



The home on the left was the home of Emily Carr, a noted Victoria author. The home on the right resembles the “Painted Ladies” of San Francisco. There were 53 colors used to paint that home.

The photo on the left is a carillon donated by the people of Netherlands as gratitude for Canadian soldiers freeing the country during WW 2. The photo on the right is the parliament building.



When we were in Victoria in 2015, we were treated to High Tea at the Empress Hotel below. Across the street from the hotel we stayed at last time, was the Robert Bateman Gallery. They had a nice restaurant with an outdoor patio, but were not serving food then. This time they were open, and we enjoyed our bottle of wine watching the comings and goings of boats and seaplanes in Victoria's Inner Harbor. It was a nice final memory from Victoria.



We celebrated our last port at the Share Restaurant on board with Lobster Bisque and Duck Leg Confit.



The restaurant featured a menu designed by the famous Chef Curtis Stone and consisted of six delicious courses. The dish on the left had big chunks of lobster and just a small amount of perfectly seasoned lobster bisque, the best we have ever tasted. The duck confit did not seem that special although the procedure for making duck confit is extremely complicated, and something we would not prepare at home, so the experience was well worth it.

HOME AGAIN

Our driver was there to pick us up when we arrived at Los Angeles where we started our cruise, and drove us the hour back home.

We are so fortunate to have some wonderful memories and pictures from this spectacular trip, and it's also good to be back home once more.

Thanks to all of you for your continued interest in our travels...

Best Regards,
Steve and Kathy

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