

Day 22, July 17, 2017

Tok, AK to Dawson City, YT

Dave & Ann split a pancake breakfast at the campground before heading out this morning. We left with Sue ~ 8:15 this morning and were the second group out. The Taylor Highway to Chicken was narrow, winding and pretty bumpy but at least it was paved. About 6 miles south of Chicken the pavement ended. There was major construction just as we came into Chicken, making the road a mess. We stopped in Chicken at the General Store/Café where we ran into BJ3. Dave got and mailed some post cards and we all had a snack (the mail arrives/departs Chicken twice a week on the mail plane). We also had coupons for a free gift which was either a beer mug or a Frisbee. Dave got the last beer mug. BJ3 and SDA left Chicken together. The gravel road was narrow, winding, bumpy, rocky, and overall presented a real challenge to the drivers (We take back all the bad things we said about the Tok Cut-Off. This was the worst stretch of road on the trip.). About 9 miles before the border, we got brand new paved road! Just before the crossing, BJ3 pulled over in a pull-out for lunch while SDA continued on. Ann & Dave pulled up behind a coach and waited at least 10 minutes because the folks in that coach had firewood that they had to unload. Who knows what else they had that was a no-no (they were ultimately asked to pull ahead and submit to more inspections). Our crossing was uneventful.

After crossing the border, the road ran along the ridge tops and basically above the tree line. Top of the World Highway is certainly an appropriate name for this road. The views were amazing. The road seemed a little wider and was definitely in better shape than on the Alaska side. This may be the difference between the road's being on top of the ridge as compared to along the side of the mountains. It was mostly gravel with some paved areas interspersed. The paving returned about 12 miles outside Dawson City. The road comes right down to the Yukon River on the west side, where the ferry lands to take you across. No fancy landing here; if the ferry's not in you can drive right into the river. The ride is very short but the river's current drives you way downstream because it is so strong. We landed on the Dawson side of the river and found our campground. We checked in, then went down the road to wash off our coaches. We didn't get them clean, but they looked much better than they did after driving that road.

Dave & Ann had dinner in their coach then headed down to the Drunken Goat to join BJ3 who had gone there for dinner. Afterwards, we came back to get Xena, then walked out along the dike by the river. We walked all the way down the dike to the confluence of the Klondike and the Yukon. You can tell them apart because the Yukon is really silty and the Klondike is clear.

Day 23, July 18, 2017

Dawson City, YT

We went down to Cheechako's Bakery this morning on Front St. for breakfast. Their breakfast sandwiches were excellent. We were to meet at 9:30 at the Visitor's Centre but once we were all there, no one was sure what we were doing. Ultimately we joined a walking tour that had left at 9:30. It ended up being a very large group but our tour guides did a wonderful job making themselves heard. We stopped at several of the original buildings of Dawson City where one guide gave the background and the other guide, in period dress, explained what the place had been like and what activities occurred at each location. After the tour, which was about 90 minutes, we stopped at the grocery store to pick up a couple things then came back to the coach for lunch.

After lunch we headed down to check out the authors' cabins. There was a presentation going on when we got to Robert Service's cabin. We stayed for a bit and listened then walked down the block to Jack London's cabin. It was smaller than the Service cabin and furnished more in the manner of a trapper or miner. We chose not to go in the museum. Wandered back to the Service cabin as the period presenter was finishing. People then had a chance to walk through the cabin. It was much more nicely furnished than other cabins of that period we've seen.

We headed up to the 9th Ave. Trail and walked toward the link with the Crocus Connector trail. We decided that was too steep so continued along the 9th Ave. trail. We got almost to the end and decided we should head back because it was going to pour. We finally got back to the road and got caught in the rain about 2 blocks from the campground. We sheltered for about half an hour under a stairway. When it looked like it was letting up, we made a dash for the campground. Got back, dried off Xena and decided to take showers now since we were going out for dinner and a show later in the evening.

Had dinner at Klondike Kate's with one of the guides from the visitor centre. The salmon was tasty. Afterwards we went to Diamond Tooth Gertie's for the 8:30 show. We got there early so Ann decided to try some blackjack (she almost doubled her starting amount). The show alternated between Gertie singing (she had a great voice), and 4 dancing girls (can you say "Whee!"). A guy on piano and one on drums were the band. After the show we walked down along the dike by the Yukon.

Day 24, July 19, 2017

Dawson City, YT

Went down to Cheechako's for breakfast again today; Sue joined us. Then checked out the Camera Obscura and the Nugget & Ivory store. The Nugget & Ivory had a display of gold from close to 100 different mines in the area. There was noticeable variation in the gold from the different locations. Next we went to the Northwest Territories Visitor Centre just to see what they had. We went to the Dawson City Visitor Centre and watched 2 of their short movies before going over to the Dänojà Zhö Cultural Centre. We got a personal tour of the centre, which is rather small but gained more information about this particular group of First Nation people. After that we came back to the coach to pick up Sue and head out to Dredge #4 for a 1:00 tour. We had lunch at the dredge then went on the tour. It was similar to the Dredge #8 in Fairbanks but apparently this one is the largest of its kind. Good tour guide and interesting tour. From there, we went down to the end of the road to Claim #6 to try panning for gold. You needed to provide your own tools here and you pan right in the stream. We used Xena's food bowl to try panning but it was too small and not quite the right shape. Then it started sprinkling so we drove back down the road to Claim #33 where we paid \$15 to pan some dirt. Each of us found some gold but it was less than what we got in Fairbanks.

We came back into town for a paddlewheel cruise at 4:00. We went down river first as far as Moosehide, passing the paddle wheeler graveyard, then turned around and went upstream past the confluence with the Klondike. It was a nice ride and our commentator was relatively interesting. Got back ~5:30. Joined up with Brandon, Sue, and BJ3 and went to the Triple J Restaurant for dinner.

After dinner, Dave & Ann drove up to Midnight Dome. It's quite a drive up there (about 1,000' elevation gain) and a wonderful view once you get there. It was pretty hazy but we saw a rainbow. We could see strips up the hillside across the river where they had stripped off the top layers looking for gold during

the 1896-1900 gold rush. It's green now but there were very regular, rectangular strips of short vegetation going up the sides of the hill.

Day 25, July 20, 2017

Dawson City, YT to Carmacks, YT

SDA headed out around 7:45 and stopped at the bakery for breakfast. BJ3 passed us while we ate. The road was somewhat paved, but more than half was gravel. They were doing construction on several parts, which were in various states of roughness. Where they were working, they had watered it down so it was less dusty. Part way along, we stopped at Moose Creek Lodge to check out their pastries. We had blueberry tarts but they weren't as good as the bakeries on the way up. We ate a bit of lunch while driving and our next stop was at Five Finger Rapids. There was a great view from the top of the bluff and a trail that led down to a lower bluff right next to the river. It was about a 2 km hike down to the river overlook. Sue counted 202 steps down. It was a nice hike and we caught up to BJ3 there.

Very soon after Five Finger Rapids, we arrived in Carmacks. The RV park is right next to the river and all our sites were in the shade. We walked down the boardwalk to the Visitor's Centre then headed in the other direction to see some of the historical sites.

We gathered at 5:30 to discuss tomorrow's travel plans and look ahead to the first day in Skagway. From the meeting, we went to dinner at the Gold Nugget restaurant on site. Tonight's meal was halibut. After dinner, Jeanie offered turtle ice cream so just about everyone gathered there and chatted for a while longer.

Day 26, July 21, 2017

Carmacks, YT to Skagway, AK

Headed out of Carmacks ~8:00 and made our first stop at Montague Roadhouse a bit south of Carmacks. It is just the frame that is left but it's the largest one we've seen. It was 2 stories tall, the outer walls were still all standing and you could see where some sort of storage pit or cellar had been inside the structure. After that was a stop at Braeburn Lodge for cinnamon buns. Unfortunately, we arrived just after 2 tour buses so there was a large crowd in a little tiny space. The cinnamon buns were HUGE so we got 1 to split 7 ways.

Our next stop was Whitehorse. We needed gas, and Sue wanted to get some more bread pudding and visit the fish ladder. We ended up getting lunch at a deli across from the Visitor's Centre, got gas, then drove out to the fish ladder. No salmon yet. From there, we drove up Miles Canyon to the bridge so Sue could have a chance to see the gorge. Then we headed south toward the border.

Our first stop on the trip south of Whitehorse was at Emerald Lake which was beautiful. All the variations of green in the water were great. We made a quick stop at the Caribou Crossing Trading Post. It sounded interesting from Milepost, but it struck us as a high priced, gifty, mish-mash of things, so we moved on. We also stopped briefly at Carcross Desert; it was impressive to see sand dunes like that in this part of the world. Skipped Carcross and stopped at Log Cabin. We thought this was a structure but discovered it was actually the location of a settlement named Log Cabin. It's in the high mountain valley where the road crosses the railroad. The scenery along here was amazing. All alpine with some shrubs,

moss and lichens but no trees. Moonscape is an apt description. The mountains in the background just completed the picture. Crossed through the border with no problems, then started the 11 mile descent into Skagway. It's about a 3000 ft. drop from White Pass near the border to the coast. We fell in behind a huge group of bicyclists heading down the hill from the border. Fortunately, they pulled over at the first pull-out so we could pass them.

Got to Skagway ~ 4; everyone else had arrived. Did laundry while waiting for our gathering at 5:30. We got information on our departure time tomorrow and what the plans for the day would be. BJ3 had walked into town to explore and got back after we were done. We had dinner then walked around the town. Saw the first of the 3 cruise ships leave and found some places to visit on Sunday.

Day 27, July 22, 2017

Skagway, AK to Juneau, AK and back

Got picked up by the shuttle bus at 7:30 this morning to catch the ferry to Juneau. Beth chose to stay behind so it was 10 of us on this trip. The ferry went first to Haines to pick up passengers, then down the fjord to Juneau. The captain provided commentary on the landmarks, waterfalls, glaciers, and pointed out animals in the water and along the shore. On the way down, we saw harbor seals on some tidal rocks, white winged scoters, numerous bald eagles, and a pod of Dall's porpoises. The porpoises were really fast and hard to see. Further on, there was a large group of Steller sea lions on the rocks. There were a few pups in the group and we saw one of them nursing. In the water, we saw a couple of yellow billed loons, numerous salmon jumping and lots of black-legged kittiwakes.

We arrived at Yankee Harbor north of Juneau and picked up a coach for the 32 mile ride into Juneau. Juneau was rainy, foggy and gloomy – perfectly normal Juneau weather. Our driver, Kody, was a good commentator, dropped us off at Marine Park downtown and told us he would leave at 3:30. SDA had lunch at Papa Rod's Halibut & Chips truck a block or so down the road. After lunch, we walked up to the capitol, which is unremarkable, admired the 2 statues there of William Seward and a fishing brown bear. In several places there are stairs connecting streets at different levels. We walked down ~ 90 steps on our way to the Federal Building. There we found the pelican statue that had been described to us. Not exactly what you expect for a statue in Alaska. From here, we went to the Alaska State Museum. This was very well done, although they really didn't have much information on the internment of Aleuts during WWII. They did have a fair amount about the Russian exploration and exploitation of Alaska as well as some info on the early US exploitation of fur trade and fishing. Their Wall of Wonder had a large percentage of the birds and animals found in Alaska and was very interesting.

The bus took us next to Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center. We walked out to Photo Point then up to the Visitor Center. They had interesting displays on the glacier and its changes, including some time-lapse photos from 2007 to 2015. They also had a video cam in a salmon stream off the glacial lake that showed salmon present. We found out where the cam was located and hiked down to the stream to look for the salmon. We could see dorsal fins and occasional splashing of the salmon about 30 yds. out, but a guy talking to the ranger offered to take us to another stream where the salmon were spawning and were much closer. We followed him to this new spot and were able to watch several sockeye salmon making redds, courting and generally doing their salmon end-of-life thing. No bears going for the salmon on this hike. Got back to the bus which took us to the ferry.

On the ferry, we headed back to Skagway along a slightly more western path in hopes of seeing whales. Our captain saw one humpback breach but we missed that. We did see it blow several times in the distance and headed towards it. We finally saw it blow again, saw its back and tail but that was all. The captain said other boats mentioned seeing orcas heading north farther up the channel but we never saw them. We did see several Steller sea lions on a channel buoy.

The trip back was much rougher than the trip out. It also rained the majority of the way back. Got back to Skagway ~ 8:30 and caught the shuttle back to the campground.

Day 28, July 23, 2017

Skagway, AK

Walked down to the train depot at 7:20 with BJ3 to take the White Pass & Yukon railroad up to the summit of White Pass. The green and yellow diesel engines are from the 1950s and 60s. The coaches are either restored 1890s coaches or replicas. The ride was 20 miles up to the summit and a gain of about 2900 ft. We were the second train to go up to the summit; the first train was all cruise ship people. Our train had about 8 coaches and only 2 of them were non-cruise passengers from the depot.

Great views even though it was cloudy. We passed above some of the clouds about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up. We passed over one wooden trestle bridge that was an original, although updated structure. It was way up the mountain, right before the first tunnel. We didn't go across the steel trestle bridge; when they switched to diesel engines, the trains got too long to go over that bridge safely. The longer trains would cause the bridge to sway and it had no side railings. They dug a tunnel to replace the bridge in 1969 and that's where we went. At the summit, the engine moved from the front to the rear of the train so it was leading going down the mountain. We flipped the seat backs over the arm pivot so they were facing the other way for the return trip.

We got back to Skagway ~ 11:30 and chose to go to Olivia's for lunch. Tasty lunch! We had the "Days of 98" show at 2:30 so Dave & Ann checked out Jeff "Soapy" Smith's Parlor. This was his actual parlor (saloon and gambling house) apparently and was filled with period memorabilia collected by someone who wanted Soapy Smith remembered. We also did a little shopping and perused the National Park museum. Across the street from the NP visitor center they had a recreation of the 1000 lb. of supplies miners needed to cross the pass into Canada. From there, we went to the show. It was a short history of Soapy Smith, his dealings in Skagway and the events leading to his death. It was a musical with Soapy, his lady friend, 2 dance hall girls and a piano player. All of them had very nice voices.

After the show, Dave & Ann went down to the Red Onion Saloon for a tour of the brothel. We got the history of the building, the history of the brothel activities and bits and pieces of the trade. It was an interesting tour and the guide did a very nice job. We walked back to the campground, walked Xena, had a brief group meeting and made dinner. After dinner, Jeanie, Jim, Sue, Dave & Ann went down to the Skagway Brewing Company for a beer and conversation. We got back ~ 9:30 and called it a day.