Our trip to Alaska-Celebrating 40 years

We left David and Stacey's at 4:30 AM on August 14, 2015. We landed in Seattle at 10:30 AM PT (3 hours earlier than Ohio). I was impressed by how many trees surrounded the airport. It was beautiful! It was rainy, which everyone says is normal for Seattle. It did not rain while we were out in it, transferring to the cruise ship. We had to wait about ½ hour to be transferred. The trip to the cruise ship took about 45 minutes. It went right through downtown. A lot of office buildings (many floors with big windows: that would be where I would like to work, so I could look out while I worked). There were also a lot of beautiful architecture: every building was differently shaped. We took some pictures.



We got a pretty quick trip through downtown. Everyone was in a big hurry to get to the ship because the A/C was not working on the bus. It looked like we were getting started on the wrong foot by having to put up with a bunch of old people complaining the entire trip. Fortunately, we did not see any of them again after we got to the terminal where we were signing in to board the ship. I was amazed by all the huge plants growing in containers on the apartment balconies throughout Seattle.

When we arrived at the cruise ship, it was like going through immigration in the airport. We had to stand in line for about ½ hour to show our boarding pass, where we received our "Seapass" which is basically your ID, card for your room entrance, plus the credit card for what you need to buy while on the ship. So, while you are on the ship, you do not have to have any other ID's with you.



The first thing that I thought was that the rooms are small, like you would imagine for a ship with 2300 passengers and who knows how many staff members on it. Our room is perfect: right above the water on the 3rd deck. We leave the curtain open almost all of the time, which helps to make it seem larger in the room, too. We can look right out our window all night and see the waves. We can also look right out and see the shore when we are close to land. Beautiful!



The first night we thought maybe we should go ahead and take some nausea meds so that we would avoid any problems. The problem for me was that it caused indigestion for about 3 hours. So, we tried it without the meds, and have not had any problem with seasickness at all.

We had to do the emergency drill, which was a total waste of time, except to find out where we go if something happens. Mostly, we were in a bar, so everybody wanted to ask about drinks.

The first night at dinner we sat next to some people who wanted to talk. As they sat drinking their alcohol, they said that what they do for their life is boring, and they had always wished they could do something like we do. Probably not!

We wandered around the ship a little bit, but didn't see everything yet. I made an appointment for a spa treatment.

Day #2:

We were at sea all day. So, we wandered all over the ship up to the 12th deck. Went through the Casino: an interesting experience. Right outside the casino, there was a scrap-booking class going on. There was a card game going on in the library. We looked at the books they had: nothing interesting. I had my spa treatment at 1:30. I could have had a massage every day on the ship, and loved it. Too expensive, though. The first night the lady said that they had advised people to bring hats and gloves, which I hadn't done. So we went to the store. They had hats, scarves, gloves for $10/each. So we stocked up for both of us, and have been thankful for the extra clothing on our tours.

In our spare time we both read a lot, and dad worked on Sudoku! Can you believe it? Dad felt like he was getting a cold, so we tried to rest a lot, in between walking everywhere. We walked up and down the stairs instead of taking the elevator.

One interesting thing I liked was that we got to see Sitka, the island seen in the movie, "The Proposal". Loved seeing that!



We saw some whales at a distance, blowing their spouts, and coming up. Most of the time you can see where the whales are at because they birds hover around and dive down when the whales are ready to surface.

Day #3:

Since we were not docking until noon, we decided to go to inspect every deck. We think that the boys would love the water slide, the putt-putt golfing, and the rock-climbing wall on the 13th deck. The 12th deck had the exercise equipment at the front of the boat, so you can be looking out at the scenery while you are running. All the runners in the family would love that. There is a helipad on 5th deck, up the steps. It is on the very front of the boat. Dad wanted to get a picture like on the Titanic, but I could hardly get up there, for the strong winds.



We left the boat at 12:30PM, trying to condense any necessities into dad's camera bag, so we didn't have to worry about a lot of things to carry. We waited for the bus to take us about ½ hour to the Catamaran. We went through downtown Juneau, the capital of Alaska. Juneau has no roads connected to the outside world. They said that the only way into Juneau was by boat, plane, or the birth canal. There is one long four-lane divided highway that goes from one end of town to the other end a few miles away. I think they said it was about 40+ miles long. They said they called it the "Road". They said that at the end of the road, there is a sign that says, "END". There are not that many cars. Rush hour consisted of about 50 cars scattered around. The main part of town was "Old town" and "New town". It consisted of being about 5 blocks long for the shopping area. It looks like a modern little town, although small. A little further out was the Governor's Mansion, where Sarah Palin lived some. They said she came in and did her business, and then went back home as soon as possible. They were remodeling the mansion. I think they said that it originally cost about $400,000+ and now

they are remodeling it for a couple million. So, it had white tarps over the front of it.

Our bus guide was very interesting: ½ white, ½ Chinese, grew up in Hawaii, and now working in Alaska for the summer. He is returning to school soon in Pre-med. He was very funny.

We arrived at the Catamaran about 2 PM, and were on it until about 5 PM. They provided binoculars for everyone who wanted them. Plus, they provided a map of where we were going, with the names of the islands. We saw a lot of whales. They said they are in "pods" or groups. Some were huge. Dad got a lot of pictures. We were out there idling along with another Catamaran, and some smaller boats. I would be scared to be out there when there were so many big whales. It seems like a group of whales could turn over a small boat like that if they all came up at the same time.

We got to see an island with sea lions. There were black and browns ones. Our guide said that that was because some were wet and some were dry. The difference between sea lions and seals is that sea lions have a flap over their ears, and their fins are different. There were some baby sea lions playing in the water. It was cute. One time we saw a sea lion swim past us in open water.





The water is milky colored because the glaciers rub together and emit a silt that turns the water milky. Glaciers are so blue because they are so densely packed that light cannot penetrate, and the first color in the color spectrum is blue, so that is what we see.

On the Catamaran, there were bathrooms (always good for me), and a snack bar. They gave out free coffee and tea. We bought some pretzels and water. The weather was a little chilly, plus it misted a little, but it wasn't too bad. Of course, I had 5 layers on, and dad had 4 layers on.

When we got back to land, they took us by bus to the Tongass National Rain forest. It is a very large forest (I think they said something like 100 million acres). There were black bears spotted while we were there, but we did not see them, thankfully! There were people who were running on a trail. I would be petrified that I would run into a bear.

We saw a huge glacier, Mendenhall Glacier. I guess I never realized that glaciers are constantly moving. At the top of the mountain, there is a lake that covers many acres, and flows down forming glaciers. When we saw the glaciers, you could hear the cracking as the ice moved. Pieces of ice break off forming icebergs.



We arrived back down town Juneau about 7 PM, so we didn't have time to go shopping. Plus, we were so tired from being gone all day. We arrived back and ate supper about 8:30 PM. We got to meet an interesting couple: He was from Scotland. She was from the US. They live in Texas. He has been in consulting work around the world. He did relief efforts in Africa. They were interested in what we do. We didn't like the supper, but were so tired we didn't want to order anything more. We ordered: flaky crust potato pie. Doesn't that sound like a pot pie? Nope! It was like a quiche. Not that great.

Day #4:

We arrived at Skagway early (7 AM). We needed to be at the pier at 8:00 to be on the train. The train was right beside the ship pier. We still had to walk a distance to board. It was an old-time train. They had a stove in the train, along with a bathroom (another great thing for me!). We had bench seats that reversed to come back down the mountain. We rode on one side going up and then everyone switched sides on the way down, so we could see the sights on both sides. Dad tried to go outside a little to take pictures, but only about 2 people would fit so he usually tried to take pictures from inside.

It was 1&1/2 hour ride up and then 1 &1/2 hour back down. We found out that it took 2 years, 2 months and 2 days to build the train from 1898-1900 through the White Pass. By then the gold rush had dwindled out. 3000 mules and horses died in the process, because the miners pushed the animals too hard to carry so much. They also did not have enough money to buy food, so a lot of them starved to death, too. There was one boulder that was blown off to clear the path for the railroad, and it killed two men and their animals, who are buried there. They never moved the boulder. There was man they told us about whose name was George Drump. He made a lot of money off of the miners. When the gold rush was over, he moved away and changed his name to Trump. He was the great-grandfather of Donald Trump. They said that there were 400,000 people who started out to the gold fields, only 3000 made it there and only 300 struck it rich.



When they were building the train track, the men had to camp down the mountain, and every morning they had to climb 1000 feet up the mountain with all their equipment (picks, shovels, rope, etc) on their backs.



We crossed over into Canada for a few feet. Then the engine was disconnected and moved to the other end of the train to pull us back down. The border patrol building is twelve miles away from the border because of the steep mountains and snow. They said that hikers are flown in by helicopter and then they hike on up to see the huge lake that they talked about yesterday. It covers so many million acres that it was at both stops, although we did not see it because it is on top of the mountain.

On the way back down, we got off the train downtown Skagway. It was like an old-time mining town. The sidewalks were wooden slats. The fronts look just like old-mining times. There were stores that were like general stores. We got some souvenirs there. We wanted to buy a gold nugget for each of the boys. At $175 each, we decided that it was not such a good idea. It was a little rainy and dad was not feeling well, so when we got done, we went to a fish restaurant. Dad had the best clam chowder he has ever eaten there. I had an excellent fish sandwich.

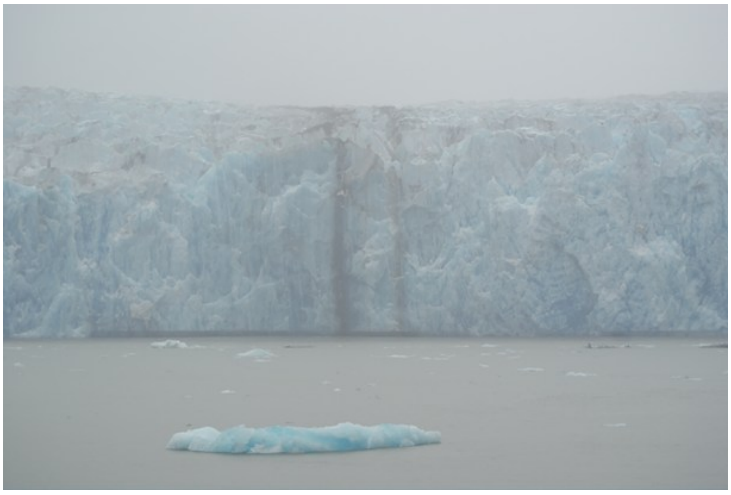


We were told by our waiter last night that the glacier was best seen between 7 and 8 in the morning. We have been waking up at about 6 anyway. So, we got up to see the glacier. We were in Tracy Arm Fjord. It was a narrow passageway with mountain rocks on both sides. At the end of the passage was a huge glacier. We heard a lot of cracking, and there were pieces that broke off and floated away. We actually spun around two or three times to stay in place so everyone could see the glacier. It was raining, so we did not stay out very long.

We went up to the buffet on 11th deck. We have been eating breakfast every morning, and a few lunches in the restaurant on 11th deck. The food is pretty good. We like it better because we can eat by ourselves.

The stateroom attendant wanted to clean our room, so we are sitting out in the lobby area near the shops. Dad is asleep. That has been the best thing: we can sleep or read when we are on the ship.

We got back a few hours before supper, so we had time for a nap. We decided to have something for supper that we knew



would be great: a strip steak. They were playing 70's music when we went downstairs. A lot of songs we like: Hang-on Sloopy, etc.

I went to the Jacuzzi to see if the hot water would help my back. There were 4 other people in the Jacuzzi who were drinking. I enjoyed the relaxation, but then more people showed up. I decided to go to the pool, but when I entered it was ice cold! So, I won't be going back to the pool.

Day #5:

Every morning we have been listening to the ship channel to find out what we need to know about the day: how to get about in each town. Sometimes they give some very helpful information.

It is cold, and rainy today. We have left Tracy Arm now, but we are seeing a lot of icebergs. In the middle of the afternoon, we were heading south and the sun broke through. It is really pretty across the ocean, with the white caps and the clouds.

In the afternoon, the ocean became very choppy. We both were nauseated. Dad took the Dramamine, but I didn't want to become sick. We decided to not go to the formal dining room. Instead, we went to the buffet. Dad ate OK. I ate a little bit of fruit. We went to bed.

Day #6:

I feel a lot better today. Not as choppy and moving in the ship. Dad took some Nyquil, so is still sleeping. It is almost 9 AM. I am glad he can sleep. It is the first day that we have been able to sleep in. The next two days we will get up early, so it is good to get the sleep. It has been so relaxing here.

I went to a lecture on the gold rush, while dad slept.

I went to watch a line-dancing class, followed by a TV show guessing game. I knew some, but nothing like some of the others. They knew the real names of actors, etc. Jared would probably be good at that game. He has a great memory.

Day #7:

We left the ship at 9:30 AM, and walked throughout the city of Victoria, British Columbia until arriving back at the ship at 3 PM, whipped! We walked along the wharf going and coming. We walked all the way to Chinatown, and shopped in some of the shops. We ate at an A&W Root Beer restaurant in the food court of the mall in the center of Old Town. The thing that impacted me the most was the beautifully manicured yards of every house. The parks were beautiful, too. We ran into a couple from the other cruise ship docked from Piqua, Ohio. Talked for a little bit. It was a nice relaxing day. Dad said he could retire someplace like this. A once in a lifetime experience! Thank you!