

RTO Alaska Trip

On Wednesday June 13th, a group of thirty-one from the Retired Teachers' Group, set out on the Great Land Tour and Glacier Bay Cruise of the Yukon and Alaska. We flew to Vancouver and then travelled by Air North to Whitehorse. Some of the group visited Kluane National Park while others toured the city taking in the Klondike Riverboat and the Mc Bride Museum. After several days, we traveled along the Klondike Highway to Dawson City. This city still maintains its character from the gold rush days with unpaved roads, boardwalks, and buildings from the past.

On June 18th, we boarded the Yukon Queen for a pleasant 4 hour cruise along the Yukon River. After disembarking in Eagle Alaska, we visited the court house and watched as one of our own was accused, tried and sentenced by his colleagues. We ventured along the rough, unpaved, dusty Taylor Highway in a convoy of two buses following a guide truck so that our driver could be warned when another vehicle was coming towards us.

After spending the night in Tok, the group travelled the Alaska Highway, on to the Richardson Highway eventually reaching Fairbanks. We visited Gold Dredge No.8, toured the facilities, and panned for gold. None of us struck it rich, but I believe each one did find some gold specks which one could turn in for cash or keep. We cruised the Chena and Tanana Rivers on the sternwheeler Riverboat Discovery. We visited the Chena Indian village, viewed a dogsled musher and a bush pilot demonstration.

The McKinley Explorer, which provided us with great site seeing opportunities, took us to Denali. Here, some of our members participated in river rafting, jeep tours, and air flights. On our second day in Denali, we took the Tundra Wilderness Tour and were able to see bears, moose, caribou, and Dall sheep. On June 23, we again boarded the McKinley Explorer on route to Anchorage. Due to the low ceiling, we were unable to see Mt. McKinley.

Sunday, June 24th, we travelled to Seward and after a site seeing cruise of the Kenai Fjords National Park, we boarded our ship the Statendam. The one major glitch in our trip occurred here as approximately one hundred and fifty pieces of luggage did not arrive at the ship from Anchorage. Some in our group had luggage, others some, and the remainder none. Holland America worked and had the lost bags flown to a coastal port and then transported to our ship by small boats on Monday.

The cruise took us to the ports of Haines, Juneau, and Ketchikan and finally Vancouver. Guides came on board the ship and explained the wildlife and the activity of the glaciers. The constant change in these glaciers is a concern for everyone.

Our group had a memorable trip, and we await Max's plans for the next RTO trip.

Judy De Groot