

A Visit To Alaska

Alaska is no place you would select for retirement; the winters are too long. You would never be without snow, winter and summer. In fact, our overall impression of Alaska was mountains topped by snow in the middle of July. We saw more glaciers and icebergs than anything else, but the weather was beautiful. No rain or clouds and the temperatures in the fifties and sixties. The nights were awfully short, darkness lasted about one hour. That must be the attraction of Alaska to the tourist. Our trip by cruise ship started at Vancouver, B. C., and sailed through the inner passage along the Canadian coast and Alaska. All along the way rugged snow capped mountains provide the scenery. The mountains hem in the towns and cities along the way. The ship docked at Ketchikan, Juneau, Skagway and Haines. These cities have little to recommend them, hemmed in against the coast, they have little space for buildings and houses. Their appearance is ratty to say the least. Juneau is the capital of Alaska at the present time. Eighty percent of the jobs there are provided by government funds. If the pressures by Anchorage or Fairbanks succeed to move the Capital out of Juneau, this city would be lost. It does have a most spectacular spectacle—the Mendenhall glacier which is a tourist attraction.

Skagway is the southern terminal of a narrow gauge railway to Whitehorse in the Yukon on the Alcan Highway. We rode this railroad one day through the most hair raising right of way you can imagine. We were glad to return to the Island Princess that evening. Glacier Bay furnished a day's cruising. It is surrounded by about fifteen glaciers which are moving ever so slowly to the water's edge where icebergs break off to furnish transportation to the seals inhabiting these waters. Sitka was the last stop before returning to Vancouver. It was the most attractive of Alaska's coastal cities. The arsenal built by the Russians is preserved, as are old orthodox churches and government buildings. The museum there proudly displays a facsimile of the check for 16 million dollars signed by the U.S. Secretary of State Seward to the Russians in 1867. Except for a little rain on the train from Skagway to Whitehorse, we had sunshine every day. Our cruise ship was first class with continued recreational and social activities monitored by ship personnel.

On docking again in Vancouver we couldn't pass up a visit to Victoria and Butchart Gardens. Our party, consisting of four couples, separated here except for Irwin and Ethel Garumeter who accompanied us by rented a car through scenic Washington, Oregon, and California, visiting friends and relatives along the way. After living out of suit cases nearly three weeks, we were glad to fly home from San Francisco on July 27th.

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