

Day 11 ~ Thursday 31 July, Skagway, Haines, Bald Eagle Preserve & Whitehorse Pass.

We wake up in Skagway, 813 nautical miles from Whittier. It is drizzling. Our driver is wearing turn of the century clothes with flowered hat, and introduces herself as Rosie. She pointedly tells **us her petticoat is white, not red like "Those other women."** We ride in a restored 1927 Mac Bus for a brief city tour. Gold was discovered here in 1898. Now there are just 800 residents, 4 churches, 4 salons and 4 policemen but 750k visitors each year. Milk is \$6/gal.

The Alaska Liquor store sells guns and liquor over the same counter.....



Gold miners.



Turn of the Century building being restored.



Guns and Liquor...



For good fortune.

The tide goes from 6ft below sea level to 20ft above every six hours and is low. The dock floats, guided by barnacle studded pillars. The ramp is awkwardly steep.

The private ferry to Haines is fast. Water splashes off the windows. Streams tumble down the steep cliffs. It takes about 20 minutes to travel up the Lynn Canal, transfer to a bus and another 20 minutes to the Chilkat River.



Don't slip!



Here we put on life preservers and rubber boots then wade to a rocky sandbar where three rubber rafts are waiting. Each raft has three *compartments*. Tom Lang, our guide sits in the middle with long oars to steer. Four of us sit precariously on the side in front and four behind. This is a shallow braided river. The fast current moves the rocks around and the navigable stream changes daily. A young lady manages the lead raft, picking the best route for today. We soon get stuck. A few feet **makes all the difference between floating and grounding.** "Jump, jump, jump." We dutifully hop up and down in unison, clutching what we can. This traps air underneath giving us lift and we float on. That rubber must be tough, I could feel the rocks below. The raft spins round, there is no such thing as front or back.

Welcome to Haines.



We waddle in boots...



...and life preservers...



... to our ride.

This is the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve. *Bald* is derived from an old English word meaning white. It takes four years for an immature bird to develop its white feathered head. There are about 300 birds in this valley. We see perhaps twenty and at one point float under a tree with one posing for us until a raven comes to annoy him.

The pink flowers growing along the banks are fireweed.

This part of the river is wider and deeper.



Fireweed.



Jump!



Look what I caught.



Tlingit Village.



Boots.



Me, Bald Eagle.

As we pass a Tlingit village, a resident steps out of his smoke shack to display his salmon catch, skewered on a long pole. These are subsistence fishermen and allowed a much larger catch than non residents. Gulls are getting their share too.

After rafting about five miles, we beach. Waiting for us is a picnic lunch and welcome hot chocolate. Now back to the Princess for a rest.



Picnic time.



No, she's not grounded.

At 4:15pm it is time to go again. We meet at the end of the dock. Our group has a reserved car on the White Pass and Yukon railroad. This track was completed during the Klondike Gold Rush of 1898 and takes us through spectacular mountain scenery.



Trestle Bridge.



Replaced by tunnel.

The White Pass Trail, was one of the two main passes used by prospectors during the Klondike Gold Rush, but it harbored a criminal element that made it a toll path. So many horses died during the Gold rush that the trail became known as the "Dead Horse Trail".

The trestle bridge, replaced by a tunnel, was, when built, the highest in the world.

We briefly cross the Canadian border, but for us there is no passport control. The engine reverses and pulls us back to Skagway.



Dead Horse Trail.



We took the precaution of booking dinner for this evening.

Looking back at Skagway.

