





Day 2 ~ Tuesday 22 July, Around Anchorage then fly to Fairbanks.

I pick up the phone for our wake up call and don't bother to speak to the computer. A human startles me with "Good morning Mr. Oakes."

The water in the shower is scolding and we miss not having a grab bar.

It is drizzling and we are not sure what temperatures we will encounter, so we each pack a poncho and long sleeve sweater in our carry on bags.

We are early for breakfast, which is just as well as the Pantry soon gets busy. Our young waiter asks where we are from. Having heard our accent, he explains he is an Arsenal (English soccer) fan and watches games on a Fox sport channel. Our waiter returns to chat some more. He is studying tourism at IUPUI in Indianapolis.



Another symbolic creature.



On the bus Neil gives us a few facts.

In 1853 the Russians were involved in the Crimean War. Later, strapped for cash, they sold Alaska to the United States in 1867 for \$7.2m. The name Alaska is derived from a native word meaning *Great Land*.

Anchorage was established in 1915 and chosen by the Federal Government as a rail terminal. To keep speculators out, the government financed the railroad to Fairbanks.

This area is subject to earthquakes. There are several hundred tiny ones every month, most never felt. A large quake in 1964 changed elevations killing 120.

We pass a statue of a dog which commemorates the ceremonial start of the Iditarod. **After this initial "start" and a few miles run, the race is "restarted" at a colder point with more snow.**



Commemorates Iditarod start.

Alaska has a population of 600,000 of whom 280,000 live in Anchorage. The State is almost three times bigger than Texas. If Rhode Island had the same population density, 12 people would live there.

There are 5,000 glaciers, 30 tidewater (emptying into the sea) some of which we will see from the cruise.

Ahead and to our right is a cloudy line of snow streaked mountains. The last storm here dumped 3ft of snow mid-May. Even though Alaska ranks 45th among States in road miles, there is road construction everywhere. It has to be completed in under five months.

There are eleven distinct native tribes speaking their own languages with twenty two dialects. Early missionaries discouraged much of the traditional culture. We arrive at the Native Heritage Center created to encourage and preserve it.

In the amphitheater we watch a presentation of native games, tests of dexterity and strength by teenagers, unlike anything we have seen before. Some as simple as pressing fingers or **hands together until the "weaker" retreats from pain.**

Outside we walk around a small lake past several skeletons of whales. Along the way five traditional dwellings have been recreated, each typical of a distinct tribal area. In my mind they are somewhat similar.



Native games.



Whale Jaw Bones.



Whale Skeleton.



Big Inside.

A long narrow tunnel leads to a wooden room below ground, too small for a bear to enter, the roof covered in sod for insulation. These were communal dwellings 70-200ft long.

Back at the amphitheater we watch a display of song and dance put on by teenage boys and girls. In one, a boy plays the part of a seal emerging from the sea shaking himself dry. In each hand is a group of five mounted feathers which he moves like claws. The five feathers represent birds, animals of earth, sea and sky, berries and plants, the middle one creation.

Girls hold similar fan like objects which appear to be made of fine fur. Which they move like waves.



Entrance, kill you if you stoop to enter.



Me seal!

The music consists of complex vocal chants and rhythmic drum beats. The drums resemble thin inverted dishes tuned to different tones.

A class of (native) children sits, apparently here to begin learning their traditions.

The exhibits present a fine display of native tools and artifacts.

On our way to the airport we take a tour around downtown. Anchorage has five airports and is the worlds third busiest air freight hub. The approach is packed with parking space for hundreds of single engine planes.



The flight to Fairbanks is just 40min. Neil is concerned, we are one suitcase short. OK one of the tags came off.





Pipeline.



A plug for cleaning.

The 48 inch Alaska pipeline stands on air cooled supports, not anchored to them, but sitting on a sliding platform. Neither is it straight. Every fifty yards or so it bends to left or right. This allows movement due to temperature excursions or seismic activity.

We walk underneath taking pictures.

The pipeline crosses native lands. As part of the settlement, 12 native corporations were formed. These received a multi-billion dollar settlement.

The luggage is waiting in our room at the Fairbanks Riverside Lodge, but we have to rearrange the furniture to open the bags. Outside the Chena River flows slowly.

It is pleasant in the bar by the flickering fire, even if it is gas. Our booth in Trackers is nice, and the piano player soothing. "Where are you from?" I ask the statuesque blonde waitress. "I am Czech." I order crab legs, the huge portion is a little more than I can eat.

10:30pm and no sign of sunset.



Count the oil go by, \$1.. \$10.. \$100.. \$1000..