

Day 6 ~ Saturday 26 July, Floatplane.



Denali Princess Wilderness Lodge.



Our room.

Leaving the Lodge, we pass through the town of Cantwell astride the Denali fault line. To our left are the Talkeetna Mountains. To the right beaver dams, kettle ponds and the odd Moose. A remote weather station transmits data to a central collection point. The clouds are so low we ask Neil if we will be able to fly. After two hours we are still driving through Denali National Park.

As we descend, the clouds are higher above us. There are some signs of humanity so we must have left the park. **Morning break is at McKinley View Lodge. "The view requires some imagination."**

Don't blink, that was Willow the official re-starting point for the Iditarod. The state capital (*Juneau*) was supposed to relocate here in the 1980's, but the cost was too great.

Lunch in Wasilla is at a smart Italian Restaurant with table cloths, *Evangelos*, but since we are going to fly, we dine lightly.

At Lake Lucille three small red and white float planes are waiting. Ours, a single engine eight seater Hudson accommodates six plus the pilot. It takes more distance to take off in a float plane than a wheeled one because of water resistance, but less to stop. There is no sensation to confirm our lift off and no visual reference to indicate altitude. Our pilot, retired from general aviation, lives in Michigan. This is his summer job.

To the left are year round homes.

We bank to the right over wilderness crossing the four lane highway from Anchorage at 400ft. Droplets of water slide across the window. It looks like snow on a gray day. We are looking for glaciers.



Our Hudson.



Hope the pilot can see something, because I sure can't.



Not much land to farm. Looking towards Palmer.



Where two glaciers meet they form a central moraine.



Close up, the glacier surface is rough an eroded.



A glacier terminates in the sea. Notice how it reflects blue light.



A mountain stream washes down silt to form a braided river.



Crossing the Knik Arm, the Cook Inlet to our left, we enter the Matanuska Valley and head for the Knik Glacier.

Below is Muskeg, synonymous with bog land. It consists of dead plants in various states of decomposition ranging from sphagnum moss, to sedge peat, highly decomposed muck and pieces of wood.

Flying on we head for the Alaska Range. Mountain ahead. Thinks, "Can we get some elevation."

Year after year, falling snow compresses the layers below 9:1 changing the crystalline structure. Glacial ice is blue because it absorbs all other colors but reflects the blue wavelengths. Two glaciers meet, down each side are lateral moraines (debris). Where they meet the moraine is trapped in the middle as a dark streak or medial moraine. Flying low the eroded craggy appearance of the glacier surface looks evil.

"Let's go whale watching." But we see none, just a couple of stray Moose.

Our pilot would have flown on, but the weather is closing in and the other two pilots, who I suspect have less experience, want to go home. This time we touch down on Lake Hood within Anchorage Airport. I pass everything to our escorts. It takes both hands to exit the plane and climb down the three steps.





Approach to Lake Hood.

Our coach awaits. It is raining steadily and about one hour to the Alyeska Resort. We head for the Seward Highway. Turn Again Arm to our right is fresh water with a tidal bore. On the other side, the town of Hope. Clouds or mist hover just feet above the water.

Tonight is a group dinner.



It is called *tram* I call it gondola.



A guest in the Foyer at the Alyeska Resort.



The foyer.

