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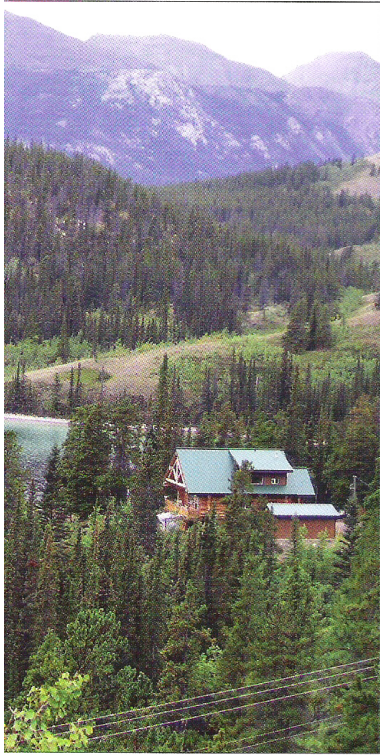
Alaska

The Last American Frontier

By Paula G. Cullison

After much research on traveling to Alaska and speaking with friends who had taken trips to America's Last Frontier, the decision to see Alaska via a cruise ship was an easy one.





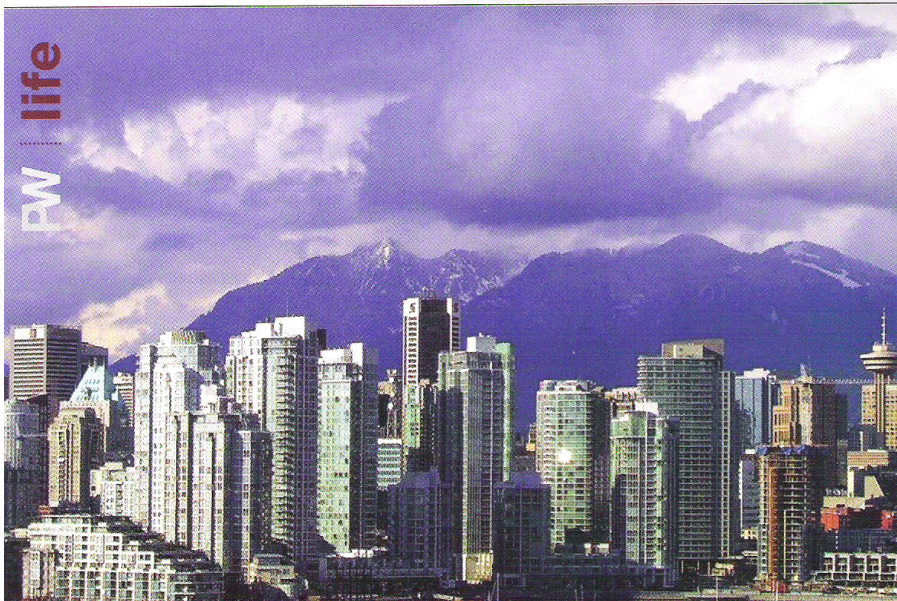
The affordability of this type of trip is the biggest surprise. With the internet at one's fingertips, it is easy to compare prices, offerings, departure dates and cities (Seattle vs. Vancouver) before making a decision. It is also better to make one's own air arrangements, as this allows for more flexibility. The next consideration is that of the offshore excursions, and there are many from which to choose. Do pack your passport, as somewhere along the line you will enter Canada.

Packing lightly is an art form that can be mastered, especially if one thinks about practicality. Alaskan travel is casual. Most ships have a quasi-formal night (check ahead); black pants, a dressy sweater, silk shawl and high-heel sandals will fill the bill. From May through September, temperatures range from 40° to 70° during the day and drop into the 30s and 40s at night. The best way to prepare for this range of temperatures is to dress in layers and to be prepared for anything from bright sunshine (don't forget sunglasses) to light rain.

A mini-suite with a balcony allows cruisers to enjoy sights and sounds in a personal way. The entertainment onboard cruise ships is generally first rate and the dining choices varied. Meeting fellow passengers and sharing travel experiences over a leisurely dinner makes the trip more enjoyable.

The ports of call along our particular seven-day tour included Seattle, Ketchikan, Juneau, Tracy Arm fjord, Skagway, and Prince Rupert Island.

Ketchikan is the fourth largest city in Alaska. A visit to the **Totem Bight State Historical Park** in the Tongass National Forest, which encompasses 17 million acres, made for a great introduction to the natives of the area. The park has a clan house that was once used for Tlingit and Haida tribal gatherings. Some figures on the totem poles were the raven (creator), eagle (peace), beaver, wolf, whale (strength), as well as the fog woman. Our visit included trips to a bald eagle sanctuary and salmon hatchery. I recommend lunching at Annabelle's, then taking a walk



Travel LOG

• **Totem Bight State Historical Park**

9883 N. Tongass Highway,
Ketchikan
907.247.8574
www.alaskastateparks.org

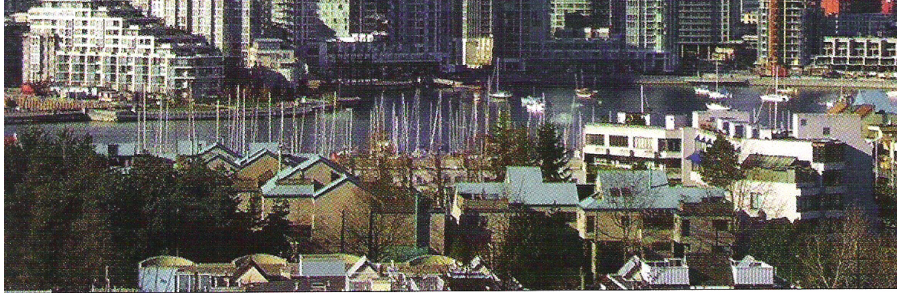
• **West Coast Cape Fox Lodge**

800 Venetia Way, Ketchikan
907.225.8001

• **St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church**

P.O. Box 20130, Juneau
907.586.1023
www.stnicholasjuneau.org

• **Alaska State Museum**
395 Whittier Street, Juneau



along the canal down Creek Street, and finishing with a visit to the **West Coast Cape Fox Lodge** for a great view of the city. These highlights will make for a delightful day.

If you can score an early arrival into the city of Juneau, Alaska's capital, be sure to take a walk around the city before the shops open. Do stop in the **St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church** (built in 1894) and light a candle; visit the **Alaska State Museum**, the **State Capitol** building and the **Convention Center**; and take the local bus to the **Mendenhall Glaciers**. On the way back to the ship, take the **Mount Roberts Tramway** up 1,800 feet for a great view of the city.

The next city on your list should be Skagway. At the headquarters of the Gold Rush in the Klondike area, take the **White Pass & Yukon Route** train through the gold rush route and pass sights such as Veil Falls, Inspiration Point, Dead Horse Gulch, Chilkoot Trail (where hikers get off), Frasier and Carcross (formerly Caribou Crossing). The forest, mountains, and lake country offer endless opportunities for memorable photographs. When stopping for lunch in Carcross in the Yukon Territory, the opportunity for dog sledding is available. Those Alaskan Huskies are fast, so you will be in for quite an experience.

Lastly, take in the treasures of **Prince Rupert Island**. The Tsimshian Nation is the name of the indigenous tribe in the Prince Rupert area. These First Nations people operate the whale-watching adventures. From the 20-person boat, numerous sightings of humpbacked whales performing their spectacular breaching can be enjoyed.

Majestic glaciers, vast lakes, thrilling wildlife and a rich history make Alaska a true wonder of the world. Whether you're looking to fish, sightsee, relax or experience the magical Northern Lights, put Alaska on your list of places to visit and discover why it truly is America's last frontier. ■

907.586.1025
www.stnicholasjuneau.org

● **Alaska State Museum**
395 Whittier Street, Juneau
907.465.2901
www.museums.state.ak.us

● **State Capitol Building**
4th Avenue and Main Street
Juneau

● **Centennial Hall
Convention Center**
101 Egan Drive
Juneau
907.586.5283
www.juneau.org/centennial

● **Mendenhall Glaciers**
8465 Old Dairy Road, Juneau
907.789.0097

● **Mount Roberts Tramway**
490 South Franklin, Juneau
888.461.TRAM

● **White Pass & Yukon Route**
231 Second Avenue, Skagway
800.343.7373
www.whitepassrailroad.com

● **Prince Rupert Island**
www.britishcolumbia.com