

**Nature  
Immersion for  
Couples in  
Alaska's Kenai**



HIKING



BOATING



CAMARADERIE

# TRAVEL JOURNAL



## THE LAST FRONTIER

Birds and mammals and hiking and kayaking and rafting and cruising and tidepooling and tramming (is that a word?)! Our Nature Immersion tour through Alaska's Kenai was everything and more than anticipated. Alaska has always been one of my target destinations and what a way to experience it! I'm an avid birder, but husband Paul not so much. When I saw the itinerary for this tour, however, I knew that it would be one that he would totally enjoy (and I could get my birding fix in). From the warm welcome at the airport to the sendoff nine days later, Eliana and Marc bent over backwards to assure a fulfilling adventure in the Last Frontier.



WRITTEN BY:

**LINDA  
MONNES**

**2023 TOUR  
PARTICIPANT**

## DAY 1 | ARRIVAL IN ANCHORAGE

Marc & Eliana delivered us to the Alaska House of Jade B&B in Anchorage and gave us time to unwind, reorganize, and explore this cozy accommodation in a quiet homey neighborhood. There were homemade cookies and coffee on the buffet and we felt at home immediately. Our room was cozy and spacious which is always a plus when trying to find room for all the 'overpacked' items. We're gathering at 5 pm for hors d'oeuvres, an orientation, and to meet the other four couples on tour.



Marc talked about how to behave and react around moose and bear. Said in Anchorage alone there are about a thousand moose. They gave each of us a handmade gift bag of useful goodies, including a t-shirt, neck gaiter, bamboo utensils, hat tether, yummy snacks, and even a book about the Alaskan island of Attu and its involvement in WWII. History buff hubby loved that.

Looks like an interesting group. Pennsylvania, Utah, Florida, Vermont and Ohio are represented and, strangely enough, five are veterinarians. I'd feel safe if only we were animals. Oh wait, we ARE.



Went to dinner at the 49th State Brewery. Sat out on the patio overlooking the Knik Arm, a branch of the Cook Inlet, complete with a volcano within the range across the water. Got my first bird here and it was a lifer— Short-billed Gull (Mew Gull). They're kinda everywhere.

Back to the B&B to repack, get organized for the next day and, of course, sleep. We're heading to Seward down the Seward Hwy with stops along the way. (You might think this 125-mile drive will only take a couple hours. HA! Not when

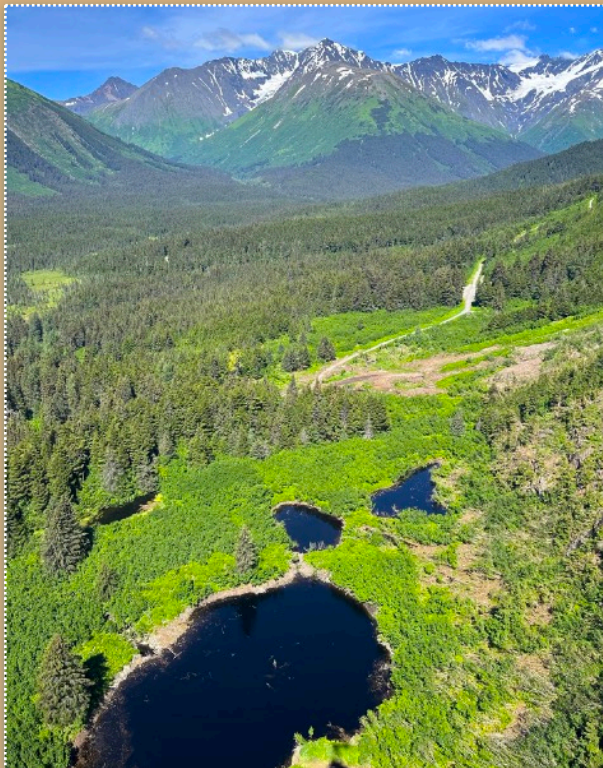
you want to stop and stare after every turn in the road).



## DAY 2 | SEWARD HIGHWAY &amp; GIRDWOOD



Black-capped Chickadees and Red-breasted Nuthatches outside our B&B this morning. Had a great breakfast — wonderful French toast and eggs and fruit. On our way now to Potter Marsh. This drive down to Seward is touted as awesome and it's shaping up to be a beautiful day for it — sunny and in the 50's °F. Potter Marsh was a perfect start. A beautiful setting along Turnagain Arm's rugged coastline. The boardwalk stroll offered Alder Flycatcher, Common Redpoll, Tree and Violet-green Swallow, Greater Yellowlegs, Red-necked Grebes, and Trumpeter Swans with cygnets. It was here that we also got our first look at the bright blue and gold Alaska train. Only about a dozen cars —lots of passengers. Sweet!



Next stop — Girdwood, a quaint little ski town that happens to be having a festival this weekend, so lots of people milling about — a young 'hippy' crowd and hippy vendors, happy to be enjoying the sun and comfortable temps. We understand this is the first such day after too many cold and cloudy ones. Ate a tasty lunch at the Spoonline Bistro. Turkey pesto sandwich and chicken salad croissant. Yum. Now headed for the Alyeska Resort just up the road where we'll ride the ski tram 2200 feet for panoramic vistas of Turnagain Arm and several glaciers nestled in the Chugach Mts. Some of us hiked even farther. Bit of snow still up there and me in tennis shoes! Spectacular views and even a

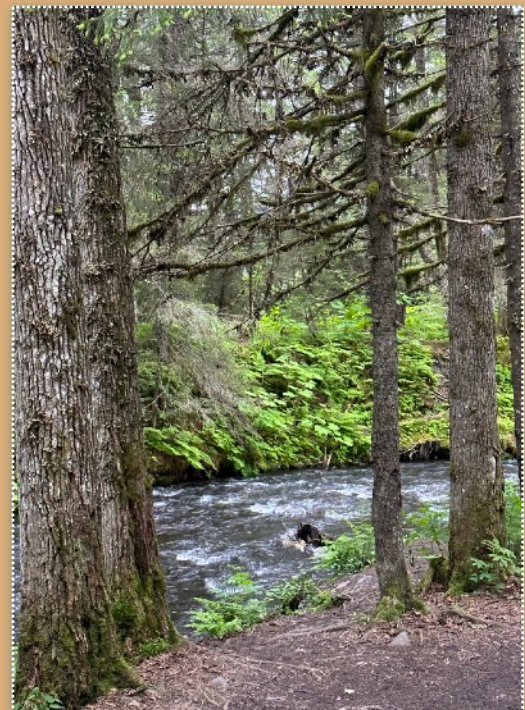
little Hoary Marmot. Gosh what a clear, sunny day. Hoping for the same tomorrow when we cruise the fjords. Forecast doesn't look promising, but one can hope.



Just outside of Girdwood, the group was talking about the possibility of Beluga Whales and suddenly I was quite sure I was seeing one; no there must be at least 10; wait, there's a CRAPLOAD of them. Marc kindly pulled over for a better look while also informing us the entire population here is less than a thousand so... Alas, they were just waves masquerading as belugas. Ummm, not too embarrassing. A more seasoned whale-watcher would have been suspicious when none of those 'whales' produced a blowhole of spray. I'll change the subject...the turquoise color of the water is striking. It's from the rock particles suspended in the glacial meltwater. Awesome! Also noticing how

Goatsbeard grows prolifically along this highway. It's everywhere and so pretty. Wish my stragglies at home would take hold. More stops got us a Dall sheep WAY up on the cliff, but a good look with Marc's scope. Also saw a moose grazing in an idyllic setting along the highway.

Got to our accommodation just outside Seward around dinnertime. The Steller Inn, our home for the next three evenings, is in a serene wooded setting complete with a babbling brook out back. Our rooms are wonderful, again with space to spread out and beautiful, natural plantings everywhere. Want to investigate some of her flowers to see if I could grow them at home: European Globeflower and some cool looking stonecrop with variegated leaves and then tiny white flowers springing above. Just outside our window a Rufous Hummingbird is visiting the feeder in the lilac. Gahh.



Soon after we got here, Eliana came to the door to say they had an American Dipper. Two, in fact. Cool. At the back of the property the driveway goes over that babbling brook. The dippers put on a little show, flying over the bridge, perching over the water and doing

a lot of 'dipping'. It's so peaceful here. Don't wanna gush, but it's so gusherable.

Met for dinner and headed downtown to The Cookery. Eliana says it's a popular place and you have to get reservations way ahead of time. The place is small and they couldn't seat us all together. We sat with the delightful Philly couple. Paul was very happy to be able to talk b-ball with Chris, and I was happy to laugh at Jenn and her wonderful sense of humor. The food was good, except I ordered the pork belly which was tasty but a bit too fatty for my preferences. Should have known; after all, it's called PORK BELLY. Waitstaff was very efficient and attentive and did everything but chew our food for us. Wait. What??



Now Eliana is driving us to some surprise adventure. She loves surprises. ...Ok, the surprise was taking us to an area (Bear Creek) where there's a fishing weir set up where the salmon are feverishly swimming upstream to do their thing — basically spawn and die. This particular weir is currently set up to prevent them from getting up the waterfall b/c researchers are trying to control and count salmon returns. They're going to harvest these. At any rate, I shed a couple fishy-tears to see these poor things doing their best to be salmon to no avail. What Marc and Eliana were really hoping was that we'd see the Black Bear that's been visiting the area to dine on the entrapped souls. Yeah, THAT would've made it all better. (Just kidding, guys, this was very educational).



So we're back now and have been trying to get ready for tomorrow's Northwestern Fjord cruise. We'll need lots of layers and rain gear to prepare for what may be some inclement weather. This first full day was great. Getting some sun though it's really cooled off down here in Seward compared to Anchorage temps. Enjoyed Potter Marsh, saw some good birds, a marmot, a moose, a sheep, enjoyed quaint little Girdwood, rode a tram to scenic vistas,

Seward Highway, blue-green water, the enchanting Steller Inn, a good dinner, the small town of Seward -- and those fish. Zzzzzz...AAAHHHHH!



## DAY 3 | KENAI FJORDS



Heading out for the Kenai Fjords cruise. I've really been looking forward to this. Always thought I'd have to go to Scandinavia to see Fjords, but here they are, right in Alaska. It's pretty cold and dreary and raining. Oh well--bundle up, it's going to be a spectacular adventure. We had breakfast right at the marina and it was surprisingly good -- cheesy omelet, bacon, English muffin .. barely had a chance to finish before they were telling us to board — a little after 8. We thought we weren't leaving till 9. Great! Away we go.

...And now we're back-- a 9-hour tour! Despite the weather, this was FANTASTIC. Have I used that adjective yet? Our cruise on the M/V Viewfinder (Major Marine Tours) began out of Seward heading south down Resurrection Bay. We saw SO much – got several lifers (kittiwakes, puffins, murre, murrelets, auklets ..) AND orcas and humpbacks, porpoises, harbor seals, sea lions, sea otters with pups sitting on them as they floated, fantastic calving icebergs, and waterfalls. The captain and Gilligan were both great birders and did a good job of getting us to



hotspots and identifying birds and mammals. Took us into little coves where the birds were nesting on the ledges -- puffins, murre, cormorants, lots of gulls and kittiwakes flying about. An especially enchanting stop was at Spire Cove which also offered abundant bird life and a wonderful example of the rugged coastline of these fjords. Saw a very cool humpback display called bubble-net feeding where one or more of the whales swim in a circle, blowing bubbles, to corral their prey and push them toward the surface. You can tell when it's happening bc the terns and gulls gather in a frenzy above them in anticipation. Then the rest of the whales together burst up through the circle gobbling up the food. There were 7 or 8 whales and we got to witness this several times. Quite the phenomenon. A real crowd pleaser. And if that wasn't enough, we then saw a pod of three transient killer orca whales. Didn't get great looks except for their dorsal fins. They tend to hug the shore b/c they feed on sea mammals including seals, porpoises and sea lions. A pod of three could consume as much as 1000 pounds of food per day, equal to about 5 harbor

seals. There was pretty much always something to look at -- seals, sea otters, Parakeet and Rhinoceros Auklets, Common and Thick-billed Murres, and both Marbled AND Kittlitz's Murrelets, Pigeon Guillemots, Tufted and Horned Puffins, Steller Sea Lions, a pod of Dall's Porpoises playfully skirting the boat, not to mention the mountainous scenery surrounding us. So I was pretty soaked and cold but also thrilled and excited. There was an enclosed dry and warm place to go on the boat but ... nature called us to be on deck!

Once out of Resurrection Bay, we turned north up Harris Bay headed for the remote Northwestern Fjord/Glacier which came right down to the water and was

thundering and calving and showing a lot of brilliant blue color. Very thrilling b/c we boated right up to it. Next we went to a very picturesque wall of long skinny waterfalls and we were practically scraping the walls he got so close. Just beautiful.



So back to the lodge. Everyone's beat. I kept thinking how great a hot shower would feel but now I'm too tired to take one. Marc and Eliana sent us a menu to order from and they're going to go pick up food for us. They're the best. There was some talk of a bonfire tonight but ZZZZZzzzzzzzz.



DAY 4 | HARDING ICEFIELD & EXIT GLACIER



Breakfast this morning at the Mermaid Grotto in Seward. Cool place. Great food. Interesting gift shop. We're all headed to Exit Glacier where we'll split up — 6 + Eliana and a local guide for the 8 hour round trip hike to the top of the Harding Icefield. Marc and the rest of us split off for a shorter hike to the glacier terminus.



Nice hike but the glacier has really receded. They have year markers along the hike and it's rather disconcerting to see how much and how fast it's receding. Got Wilson's and Orange-crowned Warblers here, as well as Hermit and Swainson's Thrushes. Hermits had been serenading us during this hike and we finally got a good look at one as he did so. We also hiked down to the glacial moraine, the gravel field, and I picked up





a couple glacial rocks to take home, much to Paul's dismay. From here our small group went to Ava's house (a woman Marc and Eliana have come to know) who has a lot of feeders in her yard. Great stop -- saw lots of Black-capped Chickadees, Downy and Hairy Woodpecker, Rufous Hummingbirds, and then some Pine Siskins came in. Haven't seen them in a while. And then some male and female Pine Grosbeaks came to the feeders. Several Red Crossbills as well. Wonderful close looks. Didn't want to leave. I'm impressed how the Kramers have embraced the locals and are very generous with them and, in turn, get great service, tips and favors when needed. Their passion and drive to do things the right way is commendable.

Made our way to downtown Seward and had lunch across from the Alaska Sealife Center at Zudy's. Had a great panini here and the place had a charming vibe. Then we walked to the aquarium (Alaska Sea Life Center). Some really cool fish exhibits and a touch-tank area with lots of pretty sea stars, urchins, sea cucumbers, and anemones. But the best thing was the seabird exhibit. You could get up close and personal with Red-legged Kittiwakes, Rhino Auklets, eiders, and puffins. There was a lot of swimming and diving and squawking going on and one especially entertaining auklet doing a frantic swim, upside down, in circles and every which way. So fun. Didn't want to leave this area but just next to it they were feeding a couple of huge sea lions so we watched that. These are huge creatures but so graceful in the water. Couldn't help thinking how much my 8-year old granddaughter would love this, yet also a big pain in the butt to have along on a trip like this.





But wait. It was almost time for a special surprise: Marc and Eliana had gotten passes to go behind the scenes for a tour of the octopus area. It was just us and it was fun but the octopi weren't very sociable that day. Our Sea Life Center guide tried to coax them out to interact with us but they only ventured so far even with the offering of a shrimp treat. Was hoping to see one fully extended but that didn't happen. Maybe next time. Still really cool to hear about these fascinating, intelligent cephalopods and how devoted the young caretakers are to them.

Then we walked a few blocks to Resurrect Art, an eclectic coffeehouse that also sells local art. Had a delicious cup of coffee in this former 100-year-old church. Got dropped back at the Steller Inn and then Marc went to pick up the others from the Harding Icefield hike. Enough time for a relaxing shower and time to rest our bones before dinner. The Harding Icefield group had their 'hike of a lifetime' — an 8-mile round trip hike with spectacular views (despite some foggy conditions) of the glacier and icefield. Wildflowers, White-tailed Ptarmigan, a distant Black Bear, and a challenging but satisfying adventure.



DAY 5 | SEWARD TO HOMER & RAFTING THE KENAI



Off by 6:45 am for one last breakfast in Seward at the Sea Bean. Now we have an hour drive to our destination, Cooper Landing, and a rafting tour on the Kenai River. ...9 am. Ugghh, headed back up the Seward Hwy and sat waiting for a pilot car for about a half hour to take us through construction. They're widening the road. A couple days ago, some of us made predictions as to how many Bald Eagles we'd see on the trip. I think we were at about a dozen at the time. One person said 30-something, another 64. I think the highest prediction was 133. We're now up to 49. FINALLY got moving again but now we're going to miss our 9:30 am launch time in Cooper Landing and the next launch isn't till 1 pm. When in Alaska - flexibility and 'going with the flow' is key. Two options: skip the 'float'



and keep heading toward Homer with stops along the way, or spend time exploring around this area, with lunch from snacks and food we have in the van, and make the 1:00 pm. I was initially SO disappointed b/c the vote seemed to be heading toward going to Homer. Then Marc put in his two cents promoting the float and the vote is now 5 for the float, 3 against, and 4 abstentions. I think some are a little leary going back out

on the water after getting seasick on the cruise. But YAY, democracy wins. We're floating on the Kenai!!

So first, we spent a little time at Tern Lake. This is a lovely spot right at the intersection of Rtes 9 & 1. Got a Common Loon here and a close-up view of a Red-necked Grebe. Practiced BIF (Birds-in-Flight) pics here. Now that I've had a chance to look at them I'm pleasantly surprised with several of the shots of Arctic Terns. I think I managed to capture the gracefulness of this alluring bird.

Then drove to Cooper Landing and walked the boardwalk and down to the lake. Boreal Chickadee, Dark-eye Junco, great looks at White-winged Crossbills. Instead of taking time to go find lunch, we just ate snacks at the van — hummus, cheese, etc. Eliana makes sure there are several bins of snacks: salty, sweet, healthy and CHOCOLATE. By that time it was nearing 1 pm so we went to the outfitters to get instructed and geared up for the raft. They had rubber boots and rubber pants and a rubber bib for us. Top all that with a big fat lifejacket and bins and camera and accoutrements and I felt like a clumsy claustrophobic.





So all 12 of us, plus Josiah our hot guide, got in ONE raft and off we went down the Kenai. Lots of Bald Eagles, some Spotted Sandpipers, Common Mergansers, Barrow's Goldeneyes. It was a swift current but buff Josiah did a great job maneuvering around rocks and rapids and overhanging trees and tricky currents, all while regaling us with a historical humorous narrative. We traveled 17 river miles. The Kenai River is 82 mi

long. Lots of fly fishermen in the river -- men, women, kids. Never saw anyone catch anything though. Got to the end and were picked up and shuttled back. Fun!

Now we have about a 2-hour drive to Homer. Driving by the 2019 Swan Lake 167,000-acre fire that burned for 6 weeks. Always disturbing to see, though I understand that fires do a lot to rejuvenate, and provide sustenance and habitat as it restores itself. We are staying at the Juneberry Lodge in a beautiful setting outside Homer, atop a hill with a stunning view of the bay and the Aleutian Range. Just as we turned onto the road leading up to the lodge, a Sandhill Crane flew across the road in front of us. What a welcoming! The lodge is a beautiful log building and Marcia and Mannfried exude warmth and passion for their Alaska and its visitors. We have the place to ourselves and it is a gem.

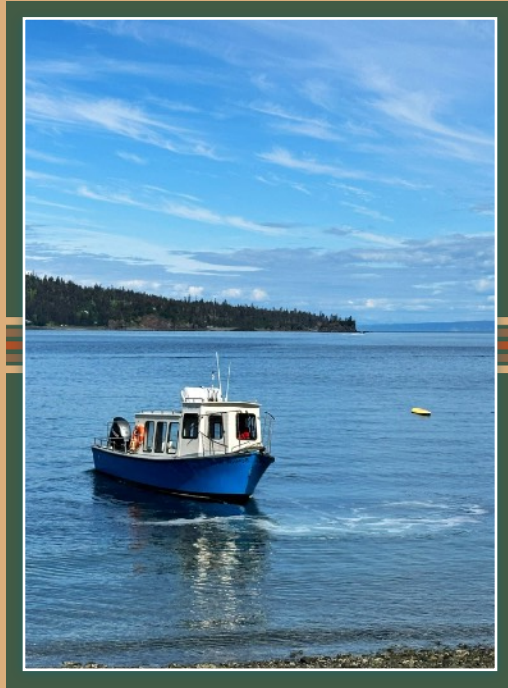


Went back down to Homer for dinner at The Kannery, a large busy place overlooking the inlet. We enjoyed our dinners, especially the shrimp dumplings and, of course, the view of those gorgeous Aleutians. Have I mentioned that we get 18 hours of daylight on this trip? The sun doesn't set until 11'ish and rises around 5 am. Have yet to see either!





## DAY 6 | KAYAKING KATCHEMAK BAY



Mannfried fixed us a hearty breakfast this morning -- scrambled eggs, bacon, toast with homemade jams. This place's wow factor tripled in my estimation when we went to the second floor to eat. A beautiful open room with fantastic views of the bay and three glaciers, and filled with antiques and musical instruments, gorgeous braided rugs, a wonderful kitchen and the walls full of pictures and artifacts and just generally cool stuff, enough to keep you busy perusing for hours. Just amazing and SO cozy.

After breakfast, we headed to the Islands and Ocean Maritime NWR visitors center. This place had some cool displays about WWII on Attu and we saw a little movie about avian research going on in the Aleutians. But I was anxious to spend a little time exploring behind the building in the Beluga Slough. Wish it had been birdier but it was pretty anyway. From here we headed down to the Homer Spit, a 4+ mile needle of land with a personality, stretching into Kachemak Bay. Junked old boats, a campground, gorgeous Lupines everywhere and then many small restaurants, businesses and outfitters -- not a highrise in sight. We're there to go on our kayaking tour around Yukon Island. I've been so looking forward to this and the weather couldn't be better--sunny skies and warmth-ish.

So we go to the outfitter, get outfitted and board a little boat, the Bonnie Ann, which takes us over to the launch area (about a 20-minute ride) where we got our kayaks, paddles and spray skirts. Two confident 20-something girls, Carlie and Jaime, were our guides and they did a spectacular job.





So knowledgeable about the history, sea life, and more. Plus they were just very fun and friendly and just as psyched as we were to be out on the water on such a picture perfect day. The blues of the water and the sky, wispy clouds, and the crystal clear views of the mountain range were a sight to behold. The girls kept saying how crappy the weather has been and what a lucky day to be

doing this tour. We paddled around Yukon island (5-ish miles). Lots of enthralling rock formations, one being Elephant Rock, which captured my interest from a distance and got even more interesting as we approached. I was thrilled when told we were going to be able to paddle through the gap in the ‘trunk’ which isn’t always possible. This was thoroughly fulfilling and I feel lucky to have experienced it. Wow.

Saw several otters lounging on their backs and waving at us. Up close and personal with three kinds of kelp that were quite beautiful: Bull, Sugar and California. Also got great looks at more Lion’s Mane Jellyfish. We pulled up onto a beachy area to sit on rocks and eat lunch. Best lunch view ever! Eliana and Marc had brought some delicious wraps and it was just a wonderful experience sitting on the rocks and looking out onto the bay — magical. Oh, and did I mention the Harlequin Ducks? Yeah, that’s right—harlequins. Continued to make our way around the island, going into coves and checking out the rocks and birds — murrelets, auklets, otters. This outing was SO MUCH FUN. I didn’t want to get out of that kayak but the Bonnie Ann was coming back for us.





## DAY 7 | GULL ISLAND &amp; THE HOMER SPIT



This morning Mannfried served delicious sourdough pancakes from his 100 year old starter. Back down to the spit/docks and met up with a young couple the Kramers know who have a boat and are going to take us cruising around Gull Island and elsewhere. Before getting on the boat, we were schooled in some tidepooling from the floating docks. The tides here can vary by as much as 20-30 feet so all the docks yield to the tides and are host to a very interesting collection of intertidal organisms that exist on the edges of the floating platforms: sea stars, mussels, urchins, anemones, tiny

little jellyfish and much more. Our hosts, again, are amazingly fluent in identifying all the little creatures and explaining how they all feed and mate and co-exist. Wish I could remember it all.

We boarded the Seabird, along with their dog Cocoa and set off. Before we were even out of the wake zone, there was a darling Harbor Seal tagging along beside us. Also hundreds of kittiwakes and Glaucous-winged Gulls nesting, some with chicks, on the harbor structures. These Black-legged Kittiwakes are a lifer for me and I've sure seen tons of them since I've been here. Then I saw some cute little birds hanging out on the grassy area on the rocks which turned out to be Black Turnstones. New bird for the trip and another lifer for me!



I've been so fascinated by all the different boats we've seen in the harbors and out on the water. At home, most boats we see are pleasure boats, but in Alaska they're boats with a purpose: fishing boats large and small, boats that collect the day's catch from the other smaller boats, tour boats, ferries, freighters, tugs. Our

destination is Gull Island and as we approached I was thrilled to see rafts and rafts of Common Murres just off our boat — hundreds of them, as well as Pigeon Guillemots and Marbled Murrelets. Lots and lots of kittiwakes on the rock ledges. Further along we see a young Black Bear foraging up on the cliff AND a Bald Eagle perched right above it! THEN Marc spies a bird I had on my wishlist but didn't really expect to see -- a Wandering Tattler! On the way back to the harbor, we got good looks at both White-winged and Surf Scoters. This was another wonderful water outing on another beautiful day, about 20 miles in all.



Just up from the boat, we walked to a little restaurant (Johnny's Corner) that served some awesome bowls of food. Paul and I both got the teriyaki chicken one, with rice and asparagus and mushrooms and cabbage and a really good sauce. There was so much food — we should have split a bowl. We're finding that everything in Alaska is BIG – the food portions, the



scenery, the distance between cities, the amount of rainfall, the mammals. We sat out on picnic tables for this meal and after lunch we had the option of going back to the lodge, staying on the spit to bird with Marc, or shopping the spit for a couple hours. Paul didn't especially want to bird and we wanted to get gifts for the girls so we shopped. Had a little time so sat outside an espresso bar and had a cup of coffee, just hangin' with the Homer homies. While we were waiting for everyone to regroup, we walked back down to the pier and were entertained by an otter right beneath us giving itself a bath that went on forever. Must be date night.

Now it's time to drive 'up the hill' to the Wynn Nature Center overlooking Homer where



Isabelle, another environmentally knowledgeable young lady took us around and talked about all the flora we were seeing in this beautiful boreal forest. This was enjoyable — lots of beautiful wildflowers; I only wish all the fireweed had been blooming because there was so much of it. It's late this year because of the long winter they endured.

Also saw some Canada Jays and kept hearing a Varied Thrush, but never got a look at it. Driving home Eliana spotted a moose and her calf right off the side of the road, about 20' from us. Very cool!

Tonight we hung out on the Juneberry patio and had pizza and that was nice because tomorrow we head back to Anchorage and this gave us a chance to soak up these spectacular views at this delightful, marvelous, first-rate lodging.



DAY 8 | ANCHOR POINT & NINILCHIK



Saddest. Packing up to leave today and it somehow seems appropriate that it's cloudy and rainy and I can't even see my beloved mountain range. Glad I soaked them in as much as possible while I could. The weather will not deter us, however, and our first stop is Beluga Wetlands, just a couple miles away. Tide is low so not a lot of waterfowl but we did see some grebes and ducks, including a couple pintails. Also saw a moose out in the tall grasses. A tad farther we stopped at the Homer Farmer's Market that offered some beautiful root vegetables which seem to flourish here in this short growing season. The local vendors were also here and I treated myself to a necklace with Sandhill Cranes etched on a beach stone.

Bye Homer, it was fun.



On the way out stopped at Anchor Point, the westernmost point on the US interconnected highway system. This sits right on the Cook Inlet so we birded the beach from a ridge above. On the beach were lots of gulls and three immature eagles. Also saw a couple Pacific-Golden Plovers — lifer!! Then we started seeing LOTS of flocks of Black Turnstones flying low over the surf. And whaddya know, every so often among the hundreds of turnstones, there would be a Surfbird, or several, flying with them. Lifer!! It was so fun watching groups go by, really fast of course, and looking for an 'outlier' among them. Thanks, Marc, for the excellent spotting and ID'ing you've provided all

week. Must say, you're a pretty good birder ;) While watching these flocks, we also got to see how boats get out of the water when there are no docks available. A big tractor-like vehicle backs down the beach and into the water and the boat comes in, lined up, and gets pulled out of the water -- a real Alaskan experience.

Next stop was in Ninilchik at a Russian Orthodox church built in 1901. Cruciform shape, 5 onion domes and a graveyard surrounded by a picket fence. The graveyard was interesting because the markers were Russian crosses and the site totally overgrown with wildflowers, lots of cow parsnip and some weeds. I rather liked this natural look with all the daisies and beebalm... We were hoping to be able to go inside, but it was locked. Still raining. On to Anchorage where we'll come full-circle to the Jade House B&B.



## DAY 9 | ANCHORAGE WRAP-UP



Ugh. Travel day. All good things must come to an end... Alaska is immense. There's an understatement. This tour around the Kenai Peninsula and all the wonderful activities Eliana and Marc planned gave us a good sampling of what the state has to offer. The hiking, kayaking, rafting, cruising, mountains, glaciers, waterfalls, mammals, sea life, camaraderie and, of course, the birds made for a sensational visit to our 49th state. Marc and Eliana cut no corners to make sure a memorable time is had by all and I, for one, am ever so appreciative. Thanks, guys!

