

# Alaskan Dream Cruise

## 8 Day "Alaska's Glacier Bay & Island Adventure"

Departed 26<sup>th</sup> May 2015



Flew to Seattle via Honolulu (2 nights).

Two nights in Seattle. Visited Boeing Factory and Pike's Market.

Stayed at Historic Mayflower Hotel downtown Seattle.

Private transfer to Hotel from Airport 10.30pm \$55.

Train from Seattle to (Westlake) to Airport for flight to Sitka US\$3 took 40 minutes.

2 hour flight with Alaska Air to Sitka - arrival 1.10pm.

Met on arrival by Staff of Alaskan Dream and Mike Wien. Arrival documentation folder contained information on Sitka pre addressed baggage labels, maps and itinerary details, passenger ID lanyards and guest list.

Mike took us on an hour drive of Sitka and surroundings.

Sitka population 3000. Saw points of interest including a visit to the Allen Marine factory where AD day boats built - 27 in fleet including the ones used on Hudson River NYC to rescue downed airliner. Met Dave Allen and daughter Zadie. Visited Bob & Betty's house and were shown over new vessel 'Misty Fjord'. 50 footer, sleeps 12, US\$50,000 per week. Still having final fit out. Met the Captain, John.



Allen Marine (Alaskan Dream Cruises) purchased a Cruise West vessel which ran aground when operated by them and have been rebuilding this at their boat yard in Sitka. We had a look over the vessel with Mike who showed us the extensive alterations and upgrades they are doing. The ship was licensed to carry 106 pax when operated by Cruise West but will only carry 64 when finished for AD. A lot of the super structure is being cut off to lower the centre of gravity improving stability and speed. This boat is going to be a spacious asset to their fleet when she begins service next season and will give them the added capacity to match the growing demand for this product.



Stayed overnight at Totem Square Hotel, corner room overlooking Marina. Very comfortable and convenient. Sitka town is very small and short walk to other Hotels, shops and sights. Hotel recommended by AD. We booked and paid US\$213.70 online.

Reported to AD Courtesy room at 0930 next morning to do a walking tour of the town. AD guides (Expedition Leaders) as well as local History experts. Visited Russian Bishops House, Sheldon Jackson Museum and St Michaels Russian Orthodox Cathedral. Lunch provided.

Boarded 'Day Boat' St Michael, a fast cat at 1330 to take us on a 3 hour Cruise to join 'Admiralty Dream'. During the cruise we saw Sea Otters, Seals, Sea Lions and hump backed whales. Interesting day and good intro to Alaskan waters of Sitka Sound. Admiralty Dream has to pass through Surges Narrows at slack tide so doesn't pick up passengers from Sitka but in fact the other side of the passage in Chatham Strait. All baggage is transferred to the ship from local hotels at 0830 and is waiting in cabins when we transfer from Day Boat cruise.

Met on arrival by crew and a welcome address by expedition leaders x 2 and Captain Ken Adams.

Evening meal set the tone for what was for me a feature of the cruise - the consistently good food. A fine variety of menu choices for breakfast, lunch and dinner and every meal was cooked to perfection, served with friendly courtesy and enjoyed by all. Complimentary wine with meal. Early night for most after a long day.

We were upgraded to a grade AAA. Cabin was at the extreme stern port side. The boat was immaculate being freshly painted during the off season and cabins were clean and functional. Instruction on the use of in cabin facilities, lights, shower, air conditioning, volume control for PA was given by our stewardess Leah.



We found the limited drawer space took a bit of adjusting to but was compensated by good-sized wardrobe room, under beds for suitcases and plenty of hooks to hang things from. The cabin was a good size and beds were comfortable. We had two single, very comfortable beds - the same category is available with queen beds if required.

Our cabin opened up on the deck, there was no inside access and being at the stern we had small deck area with tables and chairs handy to relax and read or chat to others if we wished. One deck above also at the stern was the sundeck which was semi-covered and proved a popular area for passengers to gather. We had our safety and life jacket drill here under expedition leaders tutelage when we first joined the boat.

The daily schedule began with an early-risers breakfast snack at 0600 then a general wake up call at 0630 for breakfast served from 7-8am. Coffee, tea water and cookies/cakes were available continuously and depending on activities mornings and afternoon tea either ashore or onboard. Lunches when ashore away from the ship were sandwiches and snacks or return to the ship for full lunch if we were berthed. Evening meals were served at 1830 after happy hour and generally a complimentary glass of wine or 2 included. As mentioned all meals were faultless, tasty and plentiful.



With long daylight hours some of the activities and shore excursions continued till 2130 or after.



After joining Admiralty Dream we cruised overnight in calm conditions, picked up Hunua Native Guide and Park Ranger at Bartlet cove around 0600 as we cruised into Glacier Bay National Park. Very informative and interesting lecture from these two on History, Culture and Wildlife after breakfast as we cruised up the Fjord. Spied many species of bird, mountain goats and spent time close to face of Marjery Glacier 1 mile across. Glacier calving as we watched.

In the evening we returned to Park HQ and spent some time ashore at the Lodge.

Cruised on overnight through Icy Strait to Auke Bay where we anchored before breakfast. Auke Bay is where AD anchors for visits to Juneau and Mendenhall Glacier and is 15 miles, (about 25 minutes by road) from Juneau.

Coach pick up at 0830 for shore excursion to Mendenhall Glacier about 20 minutes away. Nice short walk to view Glacier and spectacular waterfall. Sandwich lunch after Glacier visit on bus to Juneau. Spent about 4 hours in Juneau. Email access from 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Library, Shopping and a visit to Red Dog Saloon. Some took aerial Tramway (Cable Car) to top for a view.



H.A. Zaandam berthed right in downtown berth. Princess and Carnival further out.

Left town by AD bus at 1540 to rejoin A Dream. Short cruise to Orca Point Lodge - owned by Allens as a conference venue for day trippers etc and as venue for evening meals such as ours. Very attractive location and great views. Huge feed of Alaskan King Crab legs. Smores on campfire and watched a salmon filleting demonstration. Returned to boat moored at Jetty around 2200 - still daylight. Great day, sunny and warm with calm seas.





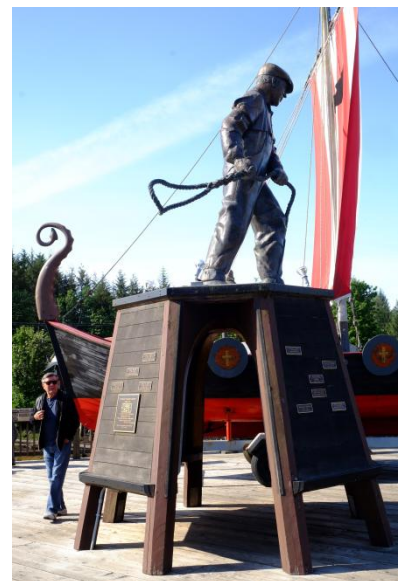
Cruised overnight to wake up as we entered Tracy Arm Fjord. Brilliant sunny day. Shorts and T Shirt on deck as we sailed past vibrant blue icebergs with seals happily sunbathing on them. Got up really close to South Sawyer Glacier. Hear the 'white thunder' as the huge chunks of glacier fell into the bay. Small waves from the calving made it look like the seals were surfing on their ice flows. Watched seals, bald Eagles, etc through binoculars supplied in cabins. After lunch, again delicious, we jumped on the inflatable boat in groups of 12 to get even closer to wildlife and sheer rock face of Fjord. Everyone got their AD supplied wet weather gear christened under a waterfall!



Sailed on to anchor at Windham Bay overnight. Spent next day at Windham Bay which is a recently purchased former fishing lodge/ huts, Alaskan Dream aim to use for overnight stays in future, probably for new 'Misty Fjord'. Went kayaking and exploring in the 'DIB' (Zodiac) in groups of 12 throughout the day. Again weather was perfect. Unfortunately no walking opportunities as no tracks and bears in proximity. The provided excursions were excellent with bird life to be seen including Canada Geese and Bald Eagles, Hemlock and Spruce trees.

Sailed on overnight after another magnificent dinner to the Norwegian settlement of Petersburg. Some rough conditions in small hours were noticed by some but no discomfort.

Petersburg is a town of approx. 3,000 and is quite simply charming! On the island of Mitkof, it's Norwegian origins are obvious. We enjoyed free time ashore before being entertained by local children with traditional Norwegian Dancing and sweet cakes. A 'bog' walk with our expedition leader pointing out local foliage was next before a short walk in the sunshine to town. It was great to get some physical activity again. Visited 'Alaskan Dream' for a look at an alternative AD vessel which was in town at the same time. Free wifi here at local pub. Books at local book shop for sale. Latest best sellers for US\$7.99! In NZ they would be \$40. Peaceful cruise overnight to Kake.





After breakfast next morning we are introduced to our local guides all Native Klingit either Ravens or Eagles. Local guide was local school teacher involved in re-establishing Klingit language. Joined them for a short bus tour of the village (pop 300) and to visit local Totem carver, the world's tallest Totem Pole and a display of dancing by local clan including tiny children. Very colourful cute. Social interaction with Native people.

Back on board Admiralty Dream for lunch then afternoon departure for Sitka. Captains dinner in the evening and a chance to thank the wonderful crew including their incredible hotel manager and chefs. Chance for last drinks and farewell to early departing passengers. Berthed back in Sitka approx 0430 for those on the 0600 flight home. We disembarked after breakfast at 0800 and spent the morning at Hospitality lounge and doing some shopping. Baggage transferred to airport and waiting for us when we were transferred at midday for 1400 flight to Seattle.

#### Comments / General impressions:

Meals throughout the cruise were delicious, well prepared and presented and all staff exemplary from both service and friendliness perspective. This exceeded expectations.

The time ashore during stops was relaxing and shore excursions efficient, simple and interesting.

Very much a family atmosphere on board and we got to know almost all other pax during the cruise. Great bunch and this is a feature of small ship cruising.

A very relaxing low stress cruise in perfect weather conditions (sun bathing on deck) and spectacular Alaskan scenery.

AD can be highly recommended with confidence as an unsophisticated efficiently run cruise company which absolutely delivers what is promised (in 2015 brochure).

Pax absolutely must book early as cruises are almost all full for this season.

AD is good value for money and a very highly respected local family owned and operated company with exceptional standards and values as hosts to their passengers and staff.



By Merv Niles  
BDE  
Francis Travel Marketing