

Alaska 26 June

My last Adventure episode had Jim Graves and I in Ketchikan. We were there for four days while 20 to 25 knot wind and rain roared up the Tongass Narrows. We headed north and at first the trip was easy with a moderate tail wind to push us along. We saw whales, a cruise ship and a number of fishing boats along the way to the Clarence Strait. As we entered the broad expanse that is the strait a set of waves and wind traveling 30 miles right off the ocean hit us on the beam. We rolled like a couple of jelly beans in an empty candy jar for about 20 miles until we could put wind and waves on our stern. Ramundo as Jim likes to call the auto pilot, couldn't handle it (too much tequila the night before) so I had to hand steer until we reached the tiny harbor called Meyers Chuck.

Next morning bright and early (sunrise is at 3:45 AM) we were off, It was an easy 50 miles up Ernest Sound and winding through the narrow Zamovia Strait to Wrangle AK. The town is tiny and is quite primitive. The only significant feature is the abundance of bars in close proximity of the docks. We were interested in taking a jet boat tour of the Stikine River but the only available seats was in two days and we didn't feel like waiting in Wrangle for that length of time.

Off to Petersburg via the Wrangle Narrows, a circuitous channel with over 60 buoys and day marks in about 15 miles. We timed the slack water and made the passage without a problem. I took Jim on a short 45 mile day trip to see the Baird Glacier. Along the way we saw our first ice bergs and of course got a picture with them in the background. Jim left me in Petersburg. It was time, he called me "hon" , bye Jim.

I haven't said much about the snow capped mountains, the long narrow arms of water reaching into the wilderness, or the forests, wild life, and rugged shorelines on every side. The scenery defies description, and pictures can't capture the scope and grandeur at every turn.

A few days of solitude waiting for Brian York to arrive and I am more than ready to get underway again. Brian brought the sun and for four days in a row Alaska was spectacular. Our first stop was Tracy Arm, a deep narrow waterway with two glaciers at the end. At first we cruised up the arm at 10 knots over glassy serene water. Then we began to encounter bergy bits (small ice bergs) that multiplied in astounding numbers as we progressed. Short of the glaciers we had to retreat, there was no longer any open water and poor Pixie was forced to push VW sized bergs aside to make any headway.

After two nights in Tracy Arm we made the 45 mile jump to Juneau. Two days in that town is more than enough. You can see everything worth seeing in about four hours, the highlight for me was visiting with our good friends, Dan and Sally aboard Spirit of Balto.

Off to Hoonah, a 75 mile trip. Along the way we fished and Brian caught two rock cod, great dinner! Hoonah was different. A small village, closed at 4:00 PM we arrived at 5:00PM, they had already rolled up the one side walk.

Next stop was Tenneki Springs. We took off all off our clothes and went into the fissure that was the hot springs, cool! The village was "charming". A set of multi colored houses on pilings over the water with no sewage connection, quite nice houses actually.

From there it was off to Appelton Cove an anchorage in a quiet bay. We caught two Dungeness crab, had them for an appetizer, great! Several boats joined us, they were part of a 1000 mile log race, Seattle to Juneau.

Our next challenge was to get to Stergius Narrows at slack water or endure a six knot current. Timed it perfectly, Sitka in front of us only 20 miles away.

Great dinner in Sitka and then Brian flew home the next day. I miss his easy going attitude and expert wine palette.