

IDAHO
A journey through the state
June 23 through July 1, 2009



A trip to Idaho sounded nice and since we have never been there we signed up for this trip. We are glad we did. This tour starts in the northern mountains and ends in the semi desert of southern Idaho

Day 1, Tuesday, June 23, 2009: Our flight to Idaho is via Salt Lake City, Utah, where we will catch a connecting flight to Spokane, Washington. From there we take the bus to Coeur D’Alene, Idaho, arriving there about 3:15 PM. Bus traveling on this tour will be nice since there are only 18 people on the bus there will be plenty of room to spread out making the bus ride more enjoyable. After checking in at the Comfort Inn, we boarded the bus for a “western welcome” hayride and Dutch oven dinner at the Rider ranch in the Wolf Lodge district. While the steaks were being cooked, the ranch owner told us about the ranch, when it was bought and how the ranch is used. She also explained that they got into the tourist business to help supplement their income. The out door dinner here was great with steaks, mashed potatoes, chicken, beans, peach cobbler and ice cream. The scenery at the ranch is beautiful, with mountains in the distance and lush green tall grass and 100 year old yellow willow trees around the house. Dinner was followed by a 20 minute hayride around part of the ranch. Throughout our trip to Idaho the weather was warm to hot and the skies were blue.

Day 2, Wednesday, June 24, 2009: After breakfast at the hotel, we boarded the bus for this morning’s destination, the Old Mission state park. The oldest building in the state is located here; The Cataldo mission of the Sacred Heart is Idaho’s oldest standing building. The mission was constructed by the Coeur D’Alene Indians along with their spiritual leader, Fr Antonio Ravalli, in 1850. Our park tour guide pointed out the building technique used to construct the church walls. Solid timbers were used for support and the walls between the supporting timbers were made of saplings connected to the supports (dowels) and then river mud mixed with grass was applied like a paste to the saplings to form the solid walls. The ceiling of the building is painted blue (most likely dyed with

blueberries) to give the feeling of being outdoors. Why? The Indians normally held services out doors and the blue ceiling made it feel more like you were outside. Fr Ravalli used tin cans to fashion candle holders and carved statuary from wood. Our tour guide pointed out that the wooden altar and the statues were stained to make the wood look like marble. This building is located in what once was a big silver mining area. There were many silver mines along the river and creeks in this area.

We then boarded the bus for the trip to Coeur D'Alene for an afternoon boat ride on Lake Coeur D'Alene. Before that we had free time to explore the downtown area and to have dinner on our own. There are many expensive looking boats in the boat dock here and we walked the mile long board walk around the dock. The downtown area is very nice looking with fountains, condos, and well manicured gardens. We continued walking in the downtown area stopping at the Premium Deli Cafe featuring San Francisco sourdough sandwiches for lunch. After lunch we headed for Lake Coeur D'Alene for our boat ride touring the lake. Lake Coeur D'Alene is located 2128 feet ASL and has about 135 miles of shore line and an average depth of 120 feet. The lake is fed by two rivers, the St Joe and Coeur D'Alene and drained by the Spokane River. In the past, the lake was used to float logs to the many sawmills that dotted around the lake. The pylons in the lake used to keep the logs together are still there although the lake sawmills are gone. The boat tour lasted about 90 minutes. There are many very nice homes built around the lake including celebrities John Elway and Denis Franz.

After this we boarded the bus for the trip to Farragut State Park. Here is located the Farragut Naval Training Center from 1942 to 1946. The story is that just after the attack on Pearl Harbor on 12-7-1941, another Naval Training Center was needed to train the many thousands of men and women needed by the US Navy. There is a "Rite of Passage" monument at the entrance that is imprinted with faces representing the 293,000 sailors who trained here for duty during WWII. The training center was located inland from the West coast because of a feared Japanese invasion. The only structure still standing here is the brig; And that is where the tour takes place. Inside are many pictures of recruits, many news papers with wartime headlines and pictures showing the rigors of basic training. The brig is a large structure with a parade ground in the center with a USN fire truck in one corner. There is a picture of the only person who trained here that was awarded the CMH. I read his citation and he was a medic.

After this very interesting tour we boarded the bus for the trip to Schweitzer Mountain and dinner in Sandpoint, ID. Schweitzer Mountain is about 6000 feet ASL and we stopped at the 4700 foot level for a spectacular view of Lake Coeur D'Alene and this is where we are having dinner at the ski lodge. Dinner was good here but the service was real slow. It took about 2 hours to finish the meal. We walked around the area observing the condos and the many shops. The area was set to open for business in just a few days.

Day 3, Thursday, June 25, 2009: After breakfast at the hotel, we boarded the bus for the trip to Moscow, ID and the Appaloosa museum. This morning we visited the Appaloosa museum and heritage center. Our tour guide was very knowledgeable about the history and mannerisms of the Appaloosa horse. The many artifacts in the museum

included saddles, chaps, methods the Indians used when travelling with babies, as well as a history about the appaloosa horse and its place in the movies and the circus. I was left with the impression that the Appaloosa was the preferred horse for movies because they are the most intelligent of horses. Our tour guide also said that the Appaloosa could travel as much as 100 miles in a day.

He also spoke at length about the Indian war of 1877 between the US and the Nez Perce Indians.

“In 1877 the Nez Perce Indians were ordered leave their native lands in Oregon Territory and resettle on a reservation in Idaho. After fighting broke out between the Nez Perce and the U.S.Army, Chief Joseph led his people in a 1500-mile retreat across the Northwest toward Canada, successfully engaging the pursuing U.S. forces a dozen times during the journey. Trapped 30 miles short of the Canadian border, Chief Joseph surrendered”.

We then boarded the bus and headed for Winchester State Park and a picnic lunch. The caterer was ready when we arrived and lunch was fried chicken, home made potato salad and a lot of other good food. Winchester Lake has an unusual feature in that since the flow of water into and out of the lake is very slow the state has several oxygenators in the lake to keep the water safe for fish and keep the algae down.

After the picnic, we travelled to the Wolf Education Center. After a briefing at the center, we had an opportunity to walk out to the preserve to view wolfs in a natural environment. We did see one wolf for a brief moment but that was all. The purpose of the Wolf Education Center is to provide public information and research concerning endangered species, with an emphasis on the gray wolf in the northern Rocky Mountains. The center does not breed wolves, they take in wolves that were raised in captivity and are no longer cared for by their private owners. The wolves are housed in a 20 acre double fenced enclosure built on the Nez Perce tribal land. The wolves of the Sawtooth Pack were born in captivity and socialized to humans as such they can never be released into the wild.

We then journeyed to the Historical Museum of St Gertrude and Monastery in Cottonwood, ID. The sisters are celebrating their 100 year anniversary in Idaho. The nuns settled here and work in hospitals and teaching and other good works for the community. The nuns conduct retreats and there is a retreat house on the grounds. The sisters grow some of their own food and can and preserve many jellies and vegetables. During our visit some of the people went to a prayer service while others looked and walked around the grounds. Almost everything here is either up hill or down hill. After prayer service, we had dinner with the sisters in their dinning hall. The monastery is named for St Gertrude of Helfta, a German saint.

After a delicious dinner, we boarded the bus for our next nights stay in Riggins, ID. We have to set our watches to Mountain Time since we are leaving the Pacific Time Zone. Parts of northern Idaho vacillate between Pacific Time and Mountain Time.

Day 4, Friday, June 26, 2009: After breakfast at the hotel, the Best Western Salmon River Lodge (what a great name), we boarded the bus for the Hells Canyon Wild River Tour with Kilgore Adventure. The Salmon River lodge is located in a mountain valley adjacent to the Salmon River; A beautiful picture postcard location. Interestingly, we will be in the Pacific Time Zone when we arrive in Hells Canyon. Hells Canyon is just a few miles away from the hotel but we have to travel over a mountain to get there so the travel time allowed is an hour. The ride over the mountain consisted of numerous switch backs and beautiful scenery. The trip through the canyon will take about 6 hours and the tour operator has box lunches and beverages on board. We will have lunch at the Hells Canyon dam. Our jet boat went through all of the biggest white water rapids and the most rugged part of Hells Canyon. We made stops at two historical sites (old buildings with a story) and stops for wildlife sightings. About ½ way in the trip and near the shore line we sighted a bear and her two cubs that were climbing in small trees along the shore, it appeared to me that we were watching a mother bear instruct her two cubs on how to climb a tree and maybe get some fruit from the tree. We were about 90 feet from the bear activity protected by the river.

The jet boats are about 36 feet long by about 15 feet wide and on our tour there were 32 people on board including some children about 12 years old. After boarding the boat the captain said that there are life jackets stored under the seats which we will need later on. We started up stream on the Snake River. We travelled through a few minor rapids and some rough water and eventually the captain stopped the boat to say that we will have to get the life jackets out but just hold on to them, no need to put them on just yet. The river was getting rougher and more exciting. After awhile, the captain stopped the boat and told everyone to put their life jackets on as we are approaching **category 5** rapids. I didn't know what a category 5 rapid was, but it sounded daring. Just then the captain said "watch the boat ahead of us; watch it go though the rapid, that is what we will be doing". I watched the boat about 500 feet ahead of us enter the rapid. The boat **disappeared** in the water and then came shooting out on a wave. It looked thrilling. Now it is our turn in the rapid. The River was getting rougher as we approached the rapids with some large rocks jutting out of the water. It seemed to me that the captain turned the boat broadside with the waves then, when it looked like we would hit the rocks the boat turned by heading into the waves and it went down with the trough of the wave and then shot up with a big spray of water on the wave's crest. There were more cat 5 rapids and the thrill was the same, a lot of "Oos and Awes, smiles, and did you get wet"?

We stopped an hour for lunch at Hells Canyon dam. After the box lunch at a picnic area at the Dam, we headed uphill to the visitor center. The visitor center had flush toilets and a brief movie on the geology of the region and the building of the dam. After lunch we got on board and started on the rest of our ride. The captain told us that the ride down stream will be more thrilling than coming up stream. He wasn't joking. We toured around the base of the dam while the captain pointed out different things here and there about the dam. There are no fish ladders at the dam and occasionally salmon get trapped here and are moved to another river. We then started our return trip. The trip downstream will be faster since we have to keep ahead of the current. Going downstream the rapids were much rougher, the wind was stronger (hang onto you hat!), and water was sprayed

everywhere, I saw one wave broke over the front of the boat (soaked the front seat), there was water everywhere. We stopped where we saw the bears earlier, they were still climbing trees and the mother bear was still there, and we were still protected from the bears by the water. The trip back was just as thrilling as the ride upstream. The trip included a stop for those who wanted to swim in the Snake River. We stopped at a sand bar and several people went swimming. One person started yelling that he was caught in the back current and couldn't touch bottom. He was thrashing in the water and a life jacket was quickly gotten to him and everything turned out okay. This made me wonder why someone who apparently could not swim would want to go swimming. We docked at about 3:30PM PDT. The bus was hot being parked in the sun all day, so we had refreshments while waiting for the bus a/c to cool the bus. The return trip to Riggins took about 40 minutes. Dinner tonight is on our own so we stopped at a local restaurant and ordered pizza. Riggins is a tourist town with the main highway being the only main road.

Day 5, Saturday, June 27, 2009: After breakfast at the hotel we boarded the bus for the trip to the Owyhee Hotel in Boise ID. Along the way we stopped at the McCall Fish Hatchery. Salmon and some trout are raised here. The tour is interesting learning about salmon and how long they are in the hatchery before they are released into the Payette River. The Payette River connects to the Snake River which flows into the Columbia River which empties into the Pacific Ocean. The Salmon we saw look really small but the guide said the fish are 1 year old. The Salmon can stick around the area where they were hatched for up to 2 years before they are "imprinted" with where they should return to for spawning the implication here is that the Salmon are released from the hatchery before they are 2 years old and so they are "imprinted" after release from the hatchery. Hatchery raised Salmon have one of their fins snipped to distinguish hatchery fish from wild Salmon. According to our guide, it is illegal to keep wild Salmon except in Alaska. You can catch and keep hatchery raised Salmon.

There are 1.5 million Salmon in the hatchery and each one has their fin snipped. In addition a certain number have a wire tracking device placed inside their body around the nose area. Question: How do you mark 1.5 million small, slippery fish, without missing one? Answer: A special team (10 people or so for about 2 weeks) comes in and works many hours and tags them all. The fish are slightly medicated so they can be handled. Question: How do you insert a tracking device into the fish? Answer: A special piece of equipment scans the fish and determines where to place the tracker wire in a matter of seconds. It takes about 6 weeks for the fish to make the journey from here to the Pacific Ocean. Not all the fish make it to the Ocean. Those that do spend most of the time in the Gulf of Alaska within the water that circles around in the gulf. He spoke of 2, 3, 4 year Salmon, that referred to the time it takes for the Salmon to have the desire to return to their place of birth. The longer the fish stay in the Ocean, the bigger they grow. Some never have that desire. Another interesting thing is that most of the Salmon (over 90%) are male (Jack Salmon), there are not too many female Salmon. That led me to wondering how they get baby fish without many female Salmon. The female Salmon lays around 4500 eggs, according to our guide. This tour was most interesting.

Next we headed for the Smoke Jumper base located in the Payette National Forest. This is a most interesting tour. We watched a 20 minute training video showing the physical training in the school. They carry about a 90 pound back pack while training in the woods. Smoke Jumpers are mostly temporary federal employees since many of them have other jobs. For example our tour guide is still going to school in the winter and a smoke jumper in the summer. **Question:** Is there a minimum age to join the smoke jumpers? **Answer:** I don't know, probably 18 but we look for prior experience in fire fight training. Most people hired are in their 20's and beyond. **Question:** The chemicals (Borate?) dropped from planes onto fires how does that work? **Answer:** It controls the flames in that they do not burn as intense and it makes our work easier. We then proceeded to tour the work areas. We went through their ready area where everything is packed and ready to go when needed. Uniforms and personal equipment is at the ready. Packages of shovels, pick ax, food for 3 days, power saws, and etc are all boxed and ready to drop from a plane. Next we went to the area where parachutes are hung to dry. There are control toggles on the chutes so the jumpers can guide where they will land. Next we viewed the sewing area where the jumpers sew and repair their personal equipment. There are many sewing machines in this room. Next we entered the parachute rigging room where each jumper packs their own chute, but they cannot make repairs to a parachute. According to our tour guide only a Master Parachute rigger can make and certify repairs. A Senior Parachute rigger can make repairs but they have to be certified as correct.

There are two planes that the jumpers use, a DC-3 seats 20 jumpers plus equipment and a dehavilland seats 8 jumpers plus equipment. The pilot is in charge of the plane and the jump master is in charge of where they will jump. The pilot looks for a clearing for the jumpers and the jump master drops smokers to determine if the wind and etc is okay for a jump. We boarded and sat in each one of the planes. Aluminum seats and equipment are lined up inside. Parachutes are hooked up to the static line inside the planes when jumping so the chutes open automatically when jumping from 1500 feet. The guide said he jumps and tucks in his knees while he is falling and counts up to 4, on the count of 4 you should feel the tug of the chute as it opens. If you don't then you use the reserve chute. When asked how often the reserve chute is used, he said hardly ever, the main chutes seldom if ever fail. Equipment boxes are dropped from 300 feet. By this time we had overstayed our allowed time and the tour director was anxious to leave because we still had a log drive to our next destination, Boise ID. On the way to the bus I walked over to the parachute training facility/tower just to get a look at it before we left. For lunch today we had a box lunch on the bus. The tour guide ordered box lunches from Subway. We arrived in Boise and visited the Basque Cultural Center and had a wine a tasting party of some Basque delicacies. We then checked into the Owyhee Hotel in downtown Boise. Me and Carol went to 5 O'clock Mass at St John the Evangelist Cathedral about a 6 block walk from the hotel. For dinner we stopped after Mass at the Mongolian Bar-B-Que in downtown Boise.

Day 6, Sunday, June 28, 2009: After breakfast at the hotel, we boarded the bus for the ride to Woodriver Cellars Winery, in Eagle ID. The plans are that we will have a wine tasting and lunch here and after lunch play some bocce ball. We toured their spacious

and well landscaped grounds where many wedding receptions and proms are held. Afterwards we relaxed and had a wine tasting party in their hospitality lounge. Later on lunch was served and after lunch we had good times by playing bocce ball.

Next we boarded the bus for a tour of the Old Idaho State Penitentiary. The temperature was 95 degrees, no shade and a dusty prison. Nevertheless we went on a walking tour of the prison with a tour guide who was great; she was upbeat for the whole tour despite the heat. The prison was built in 1870 and had several upgrades until it was closed in 1973. The original buildings are still there although some were gutted by fire. We viewed the cell blocks where prisoners spent the night, the buildings where they worked, the maximum security facilities, and the gallows facility. I'll just mention a few things here, the solitary confinement cell was not large enough to lie down fully stretched out; there was one hole in the ground for bathroom facilities, no light except through a little hole in the door. In the early days there was a "bake oven" which was a hole in the ground covered by a metal cellar door right out in the sun. Unruly prisoners would spend time in here. As the name implies, one would bake in here under the hot sun. The maximum security cells, where guards would not get within 5 feet of the cells for fear of the prisoners grabbing them as they patrolled. To serve food here, the guards would slide the trays from 5 feet away through floor openings in the cells. The gallows, only 1 person was hung here. The gallows had a rope attached to the ceiling and the convict stood on a trap door. The executioner would pull a lever to open the trap door; Gruesome! Next we visited the Boise Botanical Gardens which are located next to the prison. The Gardens are nice but it pales in comparison to the Missouri Botanical Gardens. Dinner this evening is on our own.

Day 7, Monday, June 29, 2009: After breakfast at the hotel, we boarded the bus for the trip to Sun Valley, Id. Along the way we stopped in Idaho City for a mid morning break. As we came off the bus there was the poster advertising the "The 2009 Gunfighter Rendezvous, U.S. National Cowboy Fast Draw Championship Historical Idaho City June 25 – June 28". We missed the big show. Idaho City was very crowded for this event according to the local people we talked with. Idaho City has wooden sidewalks and loose surface streets (only one street we saw), this place could have been the setting for the movie "Shane"; It looks like every western frontier town that we saw in cowboy movies.

"Gold was discovered here in 1862 and the town flourished becoming the largest population center in the Northwest. By 1866 most readily worked streams had been exhausted and the gold fields were considered panned out. In the two decades following and estimated \$250 million worth of the precious metal was taken from this area – a figure neither the California '49er strike nor the Klondike in Alaska could match. Gold from the Boise Basin helped strengthen the Union treasury during the Civil War".

We talked with some residents who said they occasionally still prospect for gold (these are retired folks with a pension). Idaho is the Gem state and they told me that just over the ridge there is a lake where gems can be found around the shore line. I wasn't sure if these guys were feeding me a line of baloney or just embellishing the truth. There was a car parked there with the following bumper sticker "Canadian wolves in Idaho, shoot and

release”. Is the bumper sticker at odds with the wolf sanctuary we visited earlier in the tour?

We then boarded the bus to continue our ride to Sun Valley. We travelled the Ponderosa Pine scenic byway and stopped for lunch in Stanley ID. It was a beautiful drive, snow capped mountains, trees, mountain streams/rivers flowing next to the highway, a new vista at every turn. Stanley ID, population 410 is a busy place. Stanley looks to be a natural stopping place for travelers on their way to a mountain vacation or on the way back. The roads in Stanley are all loose surface and the sidewalks are wooden. After lunch we boarded the bus for the drive to Sun Valley.

We arrived in Sun Valley ID about 3:30 P.M. At the entrance to the hotel is a lake with a pair of swans floating on the water. This is a luxury resort. This is an area of condos, cabins, quaint stores for shopping, outdoor ice skating, swimming pool surrounded by a glass wall to stop the breeze, outdoor amphitheater for musical events, outdoor areas to sit and just enjoy the scenery and the swans on the lakes. We viewed the movie “Sun Valley Serenade” made shortly after the resort opened. We are here for only one night. .

Day 8, Tuesday, June 30, 2009: After breakfast at Sun Valley, we boarded the bus for and for our first stop at Crater of the Moon National Monument. This is the place where the astronauts learned basic volcanic geology for their 1969 journey to the Moon. The bleak landscape here was thought to be good training ground for the type of topography the astronauts would find on the Moon. The monument encompasses about 750,000 acres including some private property. It is an area of many trails to view cinder cones, spatter cones and general viewing of old lava flows. According to a diorama of the area, the volcanic eruptions started near the current Oregon/Idaho border about 16 million years ago; the hot spot under the earth’s crust gradually moved northeast causing further eruptions, including Crater of the Moon, until currently it is under Yellowstone National Park. The last volcanic eruption at Crater of The Moon was about 2000 years ago. *“The craters of the Moon are definitely of volcanic origin. These vast volumes of lava issued not from one volcano but from long fissures across the Snake River Plain that are known collectively as the ‘Great Rift’. Beginning about 15,000 years ago lava welled up from the Great Rift to produce this vast ocean of rock. The most recent eruptions occurred about 2000 years ago”*. After hiking in this most interesting area, we boarded the bus and stopped for lunch in Arco, ID. Arco ID is the nation’s first city to be lit entirely by nuclear power (7-15-1955). It’s pretty empty here still with most of the 900 square mile Idaho National Engineering Laboratory still closed to the public. There is a historical sign here: *“Since 1949 more nuclear reactors, over 50, have been built on this plain than anywhere else in the world”*. Arco has a population of about 1500. After lunch we continued toward Idaho Falls ID, and our last nights stay in Idaho. Before arriving in there, we visited the Yellowstone Bear World in Rexburg ID. This is a drive through Bear World where you can see the bears in a somewhat natural environment. There bears and wolves and a moose. At the end of the ride through we stopped at the gift shop where there are additional outdoor enclosures that had bear cubs playing with one another like children. There was also a female deer in active labor about to give birth. We arrived in Idaho Falls just in time to check at the very nice Shiloh Inn & Suites and have

dinner. The Inn is located on the banks of the Snake River and there is a real nice river walk behind the Inn that is adjacent to the river extending all the way to the falls. The walk along the river at sunset was the end of another perfect day on our tour of Idaho.

Day 9, Wednesday, July 1, 2009: This is our final day in Idaho. After a breakfast at the hotel, we boarded the bus for the ride to Salt Lake City and our 3:10 Southwest flight to St. Louis. However we had one more stop to make at the Potato Museum. We learned the history of the potato how its cultivation spread from Peru (at the time of the conquistadors) to the rest of the planet. We made one stop for lunch on our way to Salt Lake City arriving there about 1:30 P.M. The tour director arranged for our baggage to be checked. We went through security and boarded the 3:10 flight to St Louis. We arrived in there about 6:40 PM and arrived at our house at 8:30 PM. It was a great trip.

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