

BAC Tripper Report on Olympic Peninsula Ride Section 2, August 10-23, 2011

Cool weather; coastal, lake, river and mountain scenery; temperate rain forests, great seafood, historic cities and towns, bridge crossings and ferry rides, and Grand National Park Lodges characterized this 13-day, 500-mile circumnavigation of Washington's Olympic Peninsula. We also had super happy hours, with scrumptious hors d'oeuvres provided by our trip leaders, John McManus and Brenda Cole.

The ride started in the Emerald City of Seattle, at a downtown hotel with easy Light Rail access from the airport. The first day's ride started with a ferry across Puget Sound (carved by glaciers 15,000 years ago) to Bainbridge Island (the site of Japanese-American internment camps during WWII), through Port Gamble, then across the third-longest floating pontoon bridge in the world, the 1.5 mile concrete Hood Canal Draw Bridge, onto the Olympic Peninsula. The first night was at the historic Victorian timber and ship building town of Port Townsend (where "An Officer and a Gentleman" was filmed), where a live band was playing at a waterfront festival.

The next ride was along the Olympic Discovery Trail, through sunny Sequim (skwim) in the rain shadow of the Olympic Mountains, to Port Angeles for a two day stay, where some visited Hurricane Ridge, Dungeness Spit, and local shops. Our Sunday morning ride on U.S. 101 along glacial Lake Crescent was magnificent, followed by a gentle climb along a river to the Sol Duc Lodge with its natural mineral hot spring pools in Olympic National Park. The next day we rode to Forks, where the popular "Twilight" vampire stories are set. (We had sun, but a week later it rained 3" there in one day!)

Next we rode along a series of cedar driftwood-covered beaches to stay in ocean-front cabins at the Kalaloch Lodge in Olympic National Park, where we had a fantastic dinner with a beautiful Pacific sunset as a backdrop. Then on to the true gem of the trip, the Grand Lodge from the 1920s at Lake Quinault, where we saw some of the world's largest Red Cedar, Hemlock, Douglas Fir and Sitka Spruce trees.

On the subsequent days' rides to the lumber towns of Aberdeen and Shelton (where we stayed at a very nice Indian Casino), and on to Tacoma, we encountered many miles of fast-moving, heavy traffic on roads without shoulders, leaving most of us a bit frazzled, but we all made it through without incident. The crossing of the newer (2007, \$800M) of the twin mile-long suspension bridges over Tacoma Narrows (on a pedestrian/bike lane separated from the traffic) was another breathtaking highlight of the trip, with its 510-foot concrete towers, stunning views of glacier-capped Mount Rainier in the distance, and the panoramic view of the Puget Sound from 200 feet above the water! Most of us welcomed our only other rest day on the trip, in Tacoma, after eight days of riding. It was particularly enjoyable because of our hotel's proximity to the incredible (and priceless) Chihuly Bridge of Glass with its three separate installations (and cell-phone audio guide) and the adjacent Museum of Glass, with its outdoor art and live glassmaking Hot Shop where visiting artists from around the world come to participate in a residency program and visitors (like us) get to talk with the artists and professional glassmakers while they work.

The last day's ride back to Seattle included two ferry rides (with views of Mount Rainier) on and off Vashon Island, followed by some tricky navigation on bike paths through the industrial port of Seattle, and capped off by views of the Seattle skyline as we returned along the shore to our downtown hotel and farewell dinner.