



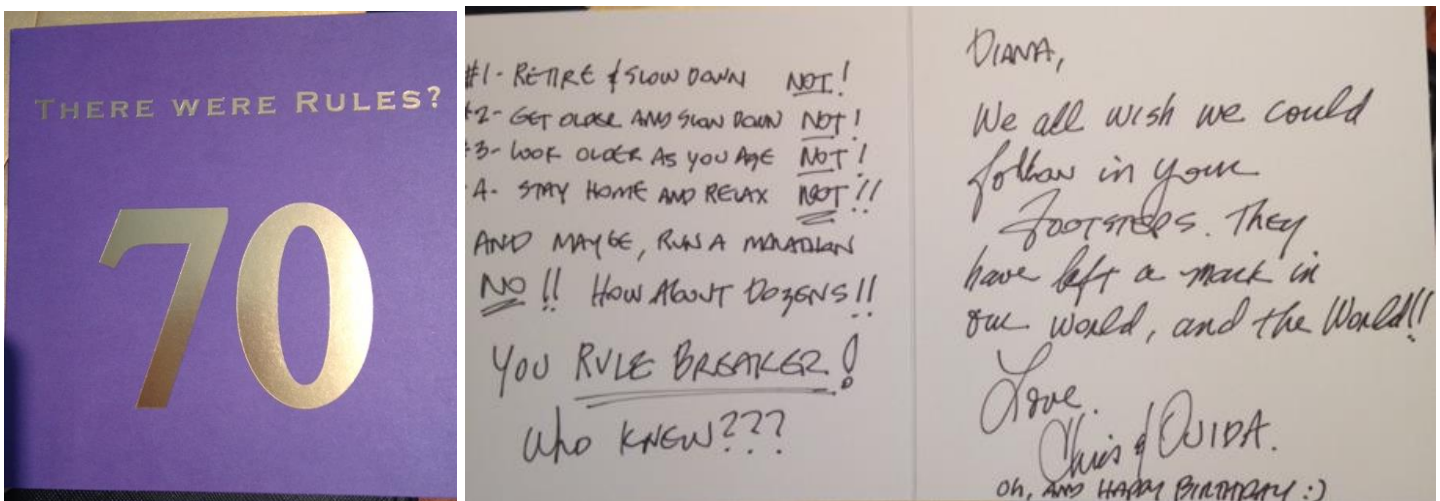
**Volcanoes: Mt. Rainier/Mt. St. Helens Trip Notes
August 21 - 29, 2015**

It's a good thing that I've already been on most of this trip because there's next to zero time to write trip notes. I had a short turn around before (from hike in Scotland) and a shorter turn around after (off to Yosemite and Sequoia). To compound it, there was no cell or internet for our three days in Paradise. (I suppose that lack of connectivity is paradise to some folks but most of us had mixed emotions.)

I'll add my past trip notes at the end for anyone interested in Seattle and Mt Rainier. Also a link to photos taken by a more professional photographer/hiker on the trip. Thanks Neil.

<https://picasaweb.google.com/117692258773294234290/MtStHelensAndMtRainier2015?authkey=Gv1sRgCJPt3-f6m-LBNg&feat=email>

What to do for my 70th birthday? Did the Isle of Skye hike count? Or the Rocky Mountains hike? Or this toughie? I try to do something out of my comfort zone and haven't exactly found it. Will the next hike in Sequoia with the 2nd toughest hike they offer (after Half Dome) be within my abilities? No matter -- here's a unique birthday card that found me upon my return home. It's my most flattering compliment since the hiker in Cinque Terre called me 'one tough broad'. I love it!



Another card said "70 Today: That's 21 in Celsius." Another card said "Happy YOU Day" knowing that I don't celebrate birthdays.

Seattle: I'd intended to take the train into town and renew acquaintances but I got lured into a lovely day at the Boeing Museum with Steve and Nola. We spent the entire day and had two memorable docent tours. Like Florence where our headline was meeting grandma and enjoying her meatball recipe, this day will be remembered by the two docents: a woman pilot and a WWII vet.

Highlights:

- Mt Rainier was the focus of a past hiking trip in 2011. Then it was snowy on all hikes. Now it was dry and smoke-filled from the fires.

- Mt St Helens hike was new for me and remember that it 'blew up' in May of 1980 so it's a unique thing to see and learn about the changes.
- Hotel pre tour was a high quality lovely Marriott with a center courtyard. Post tour was a Comfort Inn that I'd had troubles with before and had even more troubles this time so it won't be tried again. (No sheet to cover the bottom 1-2' of the mattress?!))
- Tour hotels were unique, with the Mt St Helens location giving us a chateau/B&B like having our own house, and a view of the Volcano. Mt Rainier giving us Paradise Inn with the best view possible in this historical park lodge hotel (even if it hasn't been renovated for years.)
- Strong hikers were along, most of whom I knew from prior trips and of course it's my favorite hiking leaders with www.ParksPlusHiking.com that I met at my old hiking company, now defunct at least as I knew it.
- Strong hikes with lots of elevation to start and even more to hike up and up and up, with as much as 3700' of total elevation gain.
- Decent weather though the world was hoping for rain due to the fires and smoke.

Oldest national parks

<http://www.nationalparksblog.com/10-oldest-national-parks/>

1. Yellowstone National Park (1872)
2. Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park (Sequoia 1890)
2. Yosemite National Park (1890)
4. Mount Rainier National Park (1899)
5. Crater Lake National Park (1902)
6. Wind Cave National Park (1903)
7. Mesa Verde National Park (1906)
8. Glacier National Park (1910)
9. Rocky Mountain National Park (1915)
10. Haleakala National Park (1916)
10. Hawaii Volcanoes National Park (1916)
10. Lassen Volcanic National Park (1916)

This land is our land

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/30/opinion/sunday/nicholas-kristof-this-land-is-our-land.html>

Interesting story of daddy and daughter enjoying "free" parks and pieces of the famous trails. While they can. And mostly free.

Update to Tom from airport

So we had no traffic as expected for Friday afternoon, but there was so much traffic at security that I only got 10 minutes in the club.

Then on boarding I don't believe I've ever seen so many disabled people needing help and numbers of children belonging to some of those disabled folks. Are they really in need? I'm not so sure for many of them. I am remembering the Palm Beach crowd with up to a dozen wheel-chairs boarding and only maybe three disembarking.

Of course the boarding gate was at the very far end of the concourse and I still don't know what they use those close and empty gates for. Maybe that is why so many people claim to be disabled. That and the pre-boarding benefit.



One of the handicappers was brought on board by their caretaker who dropped their suitcase on my foot. I think it's OK but the nail polish is slightly damaged and I'm limping. The gal next to me has an even worse story. Smile. She brought a bunch of cannolis and wants refrigeration of which they don't have onboard. What nerve she has. So I best quit complaining.

The good part of the story is that I very much appreciate the new food offerings in the United Club. I also enjoy the nice window shopping on the way to the gate and now look forward to finishing my new book during the flight. (I finished two books. Long flight.)

Saturday afternoon update

Surprisingly I am still here. That is at the Boeing air and space museum. It was really good but I got sort of done by 4 o'clock having been here much of the day. But the Uber app didn't answer so I'm going to wait until Steve and Nola are done at 5 o'clock.

We had two very special guided tours and both were memorable if not a little bit emotional because of the docents with special backgrounds. Our first docent was closer to my age and had been a pilot and came from a Hungarian background. She took us through the main gallery and spent about an hour and a half with us.

We disappeared off to eat which was fine and then did the outdoor tour on our own. We got to go into a dream liner, a Concorde, and various other offerings to include a fighter jet. Saw a 3D film on space exploration.

Coming back in and wanting to see the World War I and World War II sections, I went to the docent counter and inquired and got a volunteer. Don was 81 years old with unique credentials which included the design of the first presidential plane intended for running the war from the air. He had an amazing command of dates and numbers and statistics that wowed us. I think he enjoyed telling his personal stories too. And we certainly enjoyed hearing them.

I was a little bit hell-bent on getting downtown but now I sort of think it's a bit late to do so since it requires public transportation to get there. I had planned on finding another book to read and then thought there would be something in the aviation gift shop but of course I have plenty to read on my iPad. So I will just have to return to Seattle which is no burden at all.

I was thinking that the last time I spent very much time in Seattle was during the 2011 Hurricane Irene when I "got stuck" here for five or six days. Of course no one gave me any sympathy at all since you all were on the Jersey shore with no electricity.

The nice gal in the hotel concierge club gave me a coupon which will give me at least a drink if not more in the lovely atrium of the Marriott Hotel.

As you say: Life is good.



Two heroes: Nola my hiking leader deplaning a Concorde, and our WWII pilot, showing us WWI planes.

Internet connectivity? Shortly thereafter we lost all cell and internet connection and my connection home was through an old fashioned pay phone dropping quarters into the slot. Remember those phones?

Statistics – with details within the itinerary below

Sunday in Mt St Helens to Coldwater Lake

7 miles, 1400 feet elevation total, 3 1/2 hours, 86 degrees and the air full of smog-looking smoke

Monday around Mt St. Helens Volcano, above Silver Lake and up Harry's Ridge

8 miles, 2000 feet elevation, 4 hours, from low 60s to 70 in sun, then 2 movies at visitor center

Tuesday at Mt Rainier

Stop at Longmere for part of famous around-rainier Wonderland trail, onto Paradise Lodge

5 1/2 miles, 1550 feet elevation, 3 hours approx., mid 70s, include

Wednesday to Mt Rainier Skyline trail up and up then to the Lakes trail

11.5 to 12 miles, 3700 feet of total elevation gain, perfect weather tho sweaty in the sun, 6 3/4 hours with lunch stop

Thursday drive to Sunrise which is other side of Mt Rainier

6 1/2 mile, 1800 feet total elevation gain, 3 1/2 hours

Friday on way back, through old growth and mossy forests

5-6 miles, cold in 40s and rainy at first then cleared until hikes over, up to 66, 2 1/4 hours



This volunteer ranger was leading a Boy Scout group when the Mt St Helens volcano threatened eruption and only because the governor ordered everyone OUT did he and the boys survive. Maybe that's why he's been a volunteer ever since. The lake was our first day, the "most difficult trail" as the sign says was a second day up and around the volcano.



The trail was mostly rocky with some plant growth in places but clearly Mt St Helens had made a moonscape of the area. Then we're onto Mt Rainier and less smoke.



The many changing views of Mt Rainier, the largest volcano in the contiguous U.S. It is noted for the 'spaceship' or 'mushroom' type clouds that form and my 2011 trip pictures (at the end) show many layers of these clouds.

From Mount Rainier – sent with a video after the trip

After a couple days and Mount Saint Helens, we moved over to Paradise Lodge and settled in underneath the largest volcano in the contiguous U.S. Paradise Lodge was not paradise tech-wise. There was no cell and no Internet. I am now in catch-up mode.

I was there about three years ago but there was so much snow that I missed some of the hikes. I have learned that there is always something missed. There's always more to see and I got quite a few different views.

Next up will be Sequoia National Park along with Kings Canyon. One of the more difficult hikes will be attempted if the weather is good. First Tom and I will have a few days in Yosemite, always special no matter how many times I go.

I hope you can see the video. It will confirm that I am crazy. In it I declare that I am done with climbing mountains, but within a couple of days I'm off to try another one.

Bears were around the Lodge.

We saw plenty of fresh poop, and our photographer par excellence Bernie kept seeing them. After my close up view and the momma bear charging us in Kenai Peninsula Alaska, I didn't go seek them out even when they were at the front door. Thank you Bernie for these pictures which are colorful and cute from a distance.



I'm off to Yosemite and Sequoia

Thus with only a couple days between trips, reports are getting shorter and reliant on past notes which are included below.

Yet I may return to Seattle

I'm just now booking another trip that will start and end in Seattle so I may get that downtown fix yet. Olympic National Park in August 2016.

Itinerary

Fri Aug 21

4:34pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#1560
7:36pm Arrive Seattle SEA

Hotel Seattle Airport Marriott – 2 nights
3201 South 176th Street, Seattle, WA 98188 Tele: 206 241 2000

Sat Aug 22

Open – take train into Seattle and tour on own

Host Hotel Comfort Inn Sea Tac Tele 206 878 1100

Summary from www.ParksPlusHiking.com - Just thirty five years after the cataclysmic 1980 eruption, Mt. St. Helens National Monument shows both the scars of total volcanic devastation and the verdant regrowth afforded by its temperate Pacific Northwest climate. Although still an active volcano as well, Mt. Rainier has been quiet for much longer, a fact evidenced by the multiple (and remarkable) climate zones formed within the more than 12,000 vertical feet of terrain found around this huge peak. During our great volcanoes hike, we'll see the power of Mt. St. Helens and visit its fast-recovering natural landscape. We'll also learn how these two interact in a visit to the fascinating visitor center/observatory atop Johnston Ridge. Not to be outdone, we'll also spend three nights at wonderful Paradise Lodge on Mt. Rainier's southern flank. Our Rainier hikes will feature stunning vistas of "The Mountain" and its 36 glaciers, myriad kaleidoscope wildflowers, and sublime waterfalls. Our pictures just cannot do this trip justice!

Sun Aug 23 - Day 1

7:45am Pick up and be ready to hike
Coldwater Lake Distance: 6 mi Difficulty: 3

In all honesty, the first day of our Great Volcanoes hike is a teaser. Make no mistake, our hike along the shores of Coldwater Lake, which was created by the 1980 eruption, is a beautiful and engrossing introduction to Mt. St. Helens and a great leg stretcher. Unfortunately, the time limitations of the commute from Sea-Tac airport mean that our views of the shattered peak this day are just a hint of the close encounter we promise for Day 2. Post-hike, we'll soothe your anticipation in the lap of luxury that is the Blue Heron Chateau Bed & Breakfast Inn.

Lodging: Blue Heron Chateau – 1st of 2 nights
2846 Spirit Lake Hwy, Castle Rock, WA. 98611 Tele: 360-274-9595
Only coffee is in the kitchen
email: Blueheronchateau@outlook.com

From www.blueheronchateau.com - Gateway to Mt. St. Helens - The inn has seven spacious guest rooms with full baths and private balcony overlooking Silverlake, with a beautiful view of Mt. St. Helens. Enjoy a peaceful environment while relaxing on the veranda. Wake up to a complimentary breakfast to get you started on your daily adventures. Enjoy the day at the visitor centers, hiking Mt. St. Helens, fishing on silverlake, or just taking in the breathtaking views.

Mon Aug 24 - Day 2

Harry's Ridge Distance: 8 mi Difficulty: 4

Harry's Ridge is named after Harry Truman--not the president, but the long-time Spirit Lake resident now buried forever somewhere in the Monument. Our hike to and then along Harry's Ridge (above the lake) will bring us within about 5 miles of Mt. St. Helens itself. When you see the scale of the

volcano we think you will agree this qualifies as "up close and personal." One cannot help but wonder what the last 60 seconds or so of Harry's life were like as he watched his world explode.

We'll wrap up our second day hiking at St. Helens with an extended visit to the fascinating Johnston Ridge Visitors Center, where we'll learn some basics of volcanology and how it shapes the landscape around us.

Lodging: Blue Heron Chateau – 2nd of 2 nights

Tue Aug 25 - Day 3

Rampart Ridge Distance: 5 mi Difficulty: 4

Our third morning begins with a commute from the Blue Heron on Silver Lake to Mt. Rainier National Park and renowned Paradise Lodge. Along the way we will stop at the park's Longmire entrance. There we'll head into the verdant, old-growth forest characteristic of Rainier's lower elevations for a hike up to and along Rampart Ridge. Once back at the trailhead, we'll have a look at the historic Longmire museum then make our way to Paradise.

Lodging: Paradise Lodge – 1st of 3 nights
Mt Rainier National Park, Mount Rainier National Park, WA 98398
Tele? 855-755-2275 reservation office - No coffee pot, refrig or WiFi

Built in 1916 and designated as one of the "Great Lodges of the West" this historic guest lodge sits in the shadow of Mount Rainier surrounded by mountain meadows lush with wildflowers. Miles of hiking trails just outside the front door lead to adventures in all directions and offer panoramic views of glaciers and waterfalls.

Wed Aug 26 - Day 4

Skyline, Lakes Trail Distance: 11 mi Difficulty: 5

Today's trail names tell it all. From the doorstep of Paradise Lodge we first head up the renowned Skyline loop trail, where the prolific rainbow-colored display of wildflowers will stun and the views of Myrtle and Sluiskin Falls, Panorama Point and (Nisqually) Glacier Vista will astound. After looping back to Paradise, we then head down along the Lakes trail. Besides more amazing wildflowers, we'll let you guess the other highlight(s) of this trail. For those with energy remaining, a visit to Paradise's fascinating museum and visitor center will complete a very full day.

Lodging: Paradise Lodge – 2nd of 3 nights

Thu Aug 27 - Day 5

Frozen Lake/The Burroughs Distance: 7 mi Difficulty: 4

On this penultimate day of our Great Volcanoes tour we make our way to the Sunrise area of Mt. Rainier National Park on the east side of The Mountain. From Sunrise we hike up to then along Sourdough Ridge to azure Frozen Lake, the water source for the Sunrise area. With The Mountain always to our front, we then ascend toward the First Burroughs, marveling at the view down to Berkley Park and Skyscraper Mountain as we climb. Another half mile ahead and 400' up, we'll summit the Second Burroughs where the view of Rainier itself is the best we've seen in the entire park.

Lodging: Paradise Lodge – 3rd of 3 nights

Fri Aug 28 - Day 6

Silver Falls/Grove of the Patriarchs, Naches Peak Distance: 8 mi Difficulty: 4

Our final day at Rainier will be a full one with two separate hikes planned. First, we depart Paradise for the Stevens Canyon entrance to hike north along the Ohanapecosh River, perhaps the most scenic waterway in the park. Passing sparkling Silver Falls, we'll continue on to the Grove of the Patriarchs, where we'll have a last look at ancient and massive hemlocks, cedars, and Douglas firs.

From Stevens Canyon, it's on to Chinook Pass and the Natches Peak loop. The trail encircling the 8,500' peak features more amazing wildflowers, several lingering (and easily crossed) snow fields, crystal clear Tipsoo lakes, and even a short stretch on the Pacific Crest trail. We'll hike the loop clockwise so Rainier itself looms ahead of us most of the time--a fitting conclusion to this fabulous six days of hiking.

Sat Aug 29

6:00am Depart Seattle SEA via UA#743

2:18pm Arrive Newark EWR

Note: Depart to Yosemite and Sequoia on Wednesday Sep 2

Participants

Bernie and Betsy from DC area

Steve Krakeur from NJ

Nils from Gainsboro FL

Seattle's First Downtown, Reimagined - NYTimes.com

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/08/travel/another-new-chapter-in-the-life-of-pioneer-square.html?emc=edit_tl_20150307&nl=travel&nlid=22982744&r=0

Volcanoes in Washington: <http://usat.ly/1bWZPiE>



Seattle's Mount Rainier Trip Report August 19-27, 2011

This was my fifth hike of the year with www.TimberTours.com. I've previously had week long hikes with this group to Yellowstone and Grand Tetons, Death Valley, Canadian Rockies, Grand Canyon and Havasupai, Columbia River Gorge, Yosemite, Kenai Peninsula in Alaska, Maui, Big Bend, Bryce and Zion, Glacier National Park, and now Mount Rainier. Maybe more, and if I can find enough new hikes for next year and the legs continue working I'll try for five more.

I got more of a holiday than I intended. As you'll see later, I was stranded an extra five nights in Seattle after the hike due to Hurricane Irene and related flight cancelations. For that I deserved no sympathy but looked for some anyway. Here's my favorite photo taken during a Seattle highlights tour.



From Wikipedia: *Mount Rainier National Park is located in Washington 54 miles south-east of Seattle. Established in 1899 and 368 miles in size, the National Park is centered on the spectacular cone of Mount Rainier, a massive active stratovolcano some 14,410 ft high.*

History: The Park was established as America's fifth national park in 1899 (following Yellowstone in 1872 and Yosemite, Sequoia, and General Grant National Parks in 1890). The founding of Mount Rainier National Park was led by both local groups, including mountaineering clubs, newspaper editors, businessmen's associations, and University of Washington faculty, as well as by scientists throughout the country, primarily geologists. It was designated a National Historic Landmark District in 1997 as a showcase for the "NPS Rustic" style architecture of the 1920s and 1930s.



Landscape: Mount Rainier, at 14,410 feet, is the most prominent peak in the Cascade Range. The mountain stands nearly three miles higher than the lowlands to the west and one and one-half miles higher than the adjacent mountains. The volcano, which last erupted approximately 150 years ago, is encased in over 35 square miles of snow and ice. The park's total area is 235,625 acres, of which 97% is designated Wilderness. In addition to the mountain, the park contains outstanding examples of old growth forests and subalpine meadows. The park contains 26 named glaciers across 9 major watersheds, with 382 lakes and 470 rivers and streams and over 3,000 acres of other wetland types.

Flora and fauna: The Park is part of a complex ecosystem. Vegetation is diverse, reflecting the varied climatic and environmental conditions encountered across the park's 12,800-foot elevation gradient. Approximately 58 percent of the park is forested, 23 percent is subalpine parkland, and the remainder is alpine, half of which is vegetated and the other half consists of permanent snow and ice. Forest ages range from less than 100 years old on burned areas and moraines left by receding glaciers to old-growth stands 1,000 or more years. Some alpine heather communities have persisted in the park for up to 10,000 years. Species known or thought to occur in the park include more than 800 vascular plants, 159 birds, 63 mammals, 16 amphibians, 5 reptiles, and 18 native fishes. Commonly seen animals include Columbian black-tailed deer, Douglas squirrels, noisy Stellar's jays and common ravens. Other animals that are less-commonly seen but still popular include mammals like elk and black bear, which range in many habitats throughout the summer. Mountain goats typically remain in alpine or subalpine life zones.

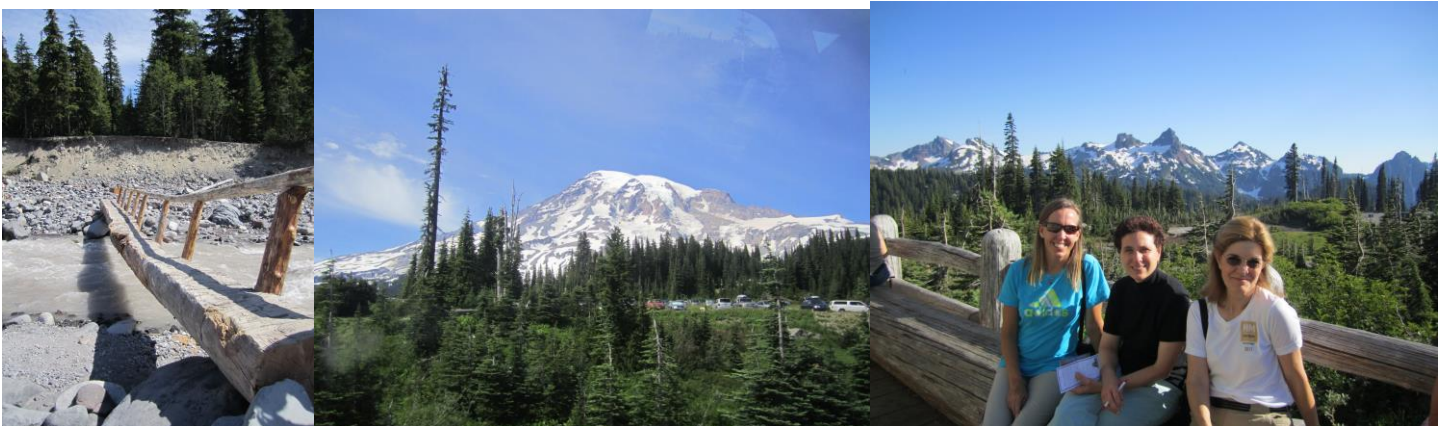
Climate: Weather patterns at Mount Rainier are strongly influenced by the Pacific Ocean, elevation, and latitude. The climate is generally cool and rainy, with summer highs in the 60s and 70s. While July and August are the sunniest months

of the year, rain is possible any day, and very likely in spring, fall, and winter. As one of the snowiest places on Earth, Paradise is worthy of a winter visit. From November to late May, expect to find 10 to 20 feet of snow on the ground. Approximately 630" of snow falls in an average winter at Paradise--in the winter of 1971-72, Paradise established a world's record with 1122" of snow!

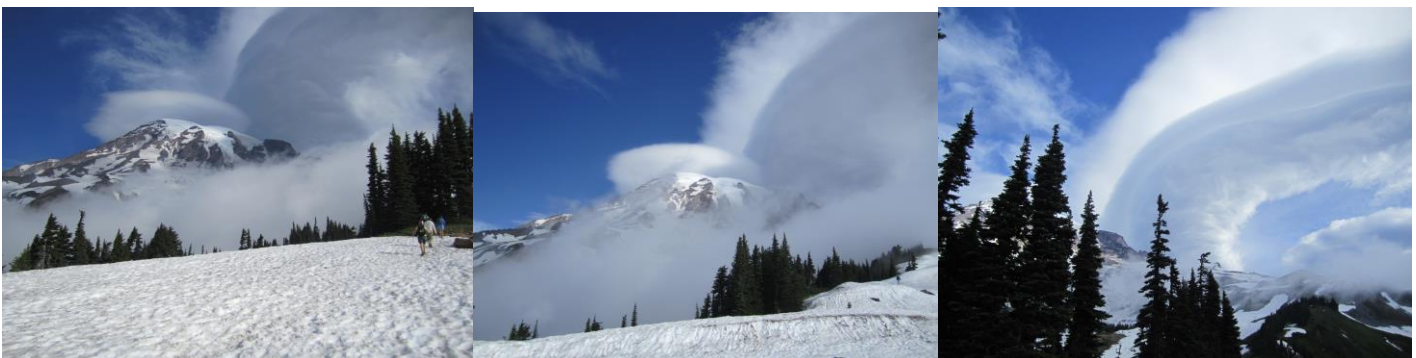
Pictures from our hikes



The mountain was seemingly in view all the time. We hiked on each side of it. That's Carol, owner of Timberline Adventures and our leader for this trip, with the old growth forest tree. She's little yes but this fallen tree makes her look all the tinier.



There were plenty of waterways to cross over and some had assistance and some didn't.



Mt Rainier makes its own weather and usually once the weather clears it starts to form a cloud that looks like a spaceship. Multiple of these umbrellas might form, one on top of the other, and they might blow off to the side and give a few layers of umbrella clouds as you see here.



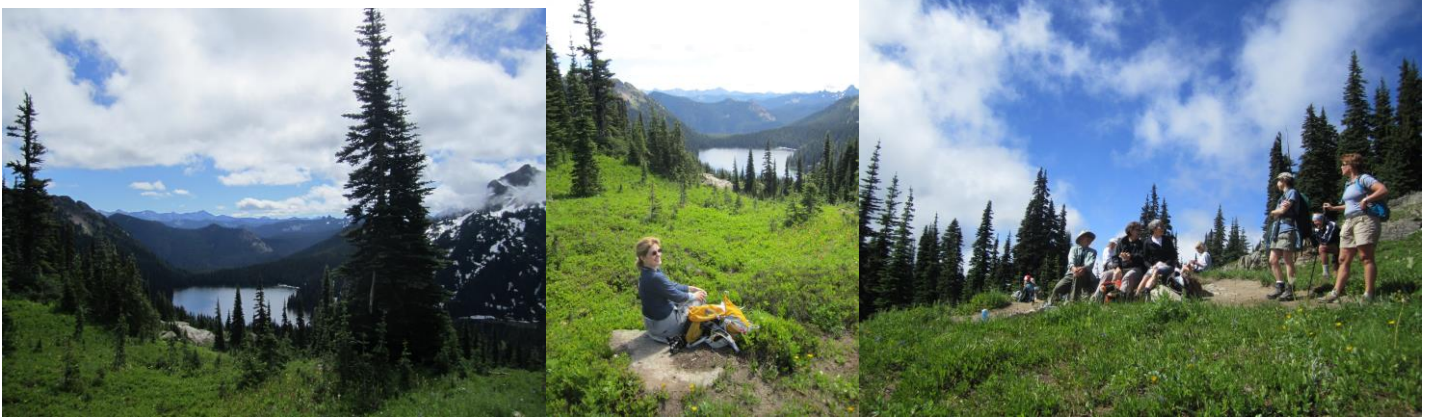
The picture in the middle is off to the opposite side of Mt Rainier. We are still in Paradise. Truly. We would stay two nights in Paradise Valley at the famous Paradise Inn.



Myrtle Falls where fellow hiker Vi and I hiked to the bottom but maybe it wasn't a real trail after all. See what's under some of the snow banks? Big wet holes!



Here are a couple of the many glaciers of Mt Rainier. We would hike between clearings, sun, and then snow banks. At one snow bank that looked like a mini glacier flowing downhill I totally froze and had to be talked through it.



Still another angle and view of Mt Rainier and a picnic spot among acres of wildflowers.



On our way to Frozen Lake, and then beyond we headed downhill to the waterfalls and wildflowers.



The mosquitoes were as prolific as the wildflowers.



It was 2400 feet of climb to get to the fire lookout where we could see not only Mt Rainier but Baker and Stuart.



It was on this trail that I saw such a huge marmot, from his backside, that I was momentarily certain it was a bear. The bugs were in proportion to the marmots and mountains too. Ugh.



It was easy to feel on top of the world!

Lodges! Always a passion and often an adventure to get to see inside a room, in many cases we made a game of seeing a room whether we stayed there or not. This trip added one more famous Lodge to my list.

Paradise Inn - Designated as one of the "Great Lodges of the West". *The Paradise Inn was originally built in 1916 and houses 121 guest rooms, the Paradise Inn Dining Room, Tatoosh Café, and authentic Native American arts and crafts at the gift shop. In 1919, Han Fraehnke, a German carpenter, added much of the decorative woodwork that he designed and built himself. A skilled craftsman, Han also built the lodge's rustic piano and the 14 foot grandfather clock. Step outside the historic Paradise Inn accommodations and be welcomed by the site of meadows in full bloom, miles of trails that lead to adventures in all directions and explore the outdoors the way it was meant to be, free from*



modern life stresses and distractions. Stand in awe of Nisqually Glacier and head out to the Longmire Museum or the visitor centers at Ohanopecosh, Sunrise and Paradise for more information and displays of the areas rich history.

Now onto truth in packaging: the rooms were extremely small and probably hadn't been renovated since the parks took control of the Lodge in the 50s. But just open the window and look out at the view and all was forgiven.

Famous Lodges

This was still another famous lodge checked off my list. Most of them were built either before or by the WPA and CCC during the depression, and the stories, art work, craft, etc. are mind blowing. I found a list of the top ten and worked out what one's I've been to: Paradise Inn at Mt Rainier outside Seattle, Timberline Lodge at Mt Hood in Columbia River Gorge, Grand Canyon Lodge in North Rim of the Grand Canyon (twice), Ahwahnee in Yosemite, Old Faithful in Yellowstone, El Tovar in Grand Canyon's South Rim (twice), Bryce Canyon Lodge (twice), Many Glacier Lodge in Glacier National Park (visited and dined only – but did get into a room!)

Open: Crater Lake Lodge near to the Rogue River in Oregon and Chateau of Oregon Caves.

Desired: Chateau Sureau at Yosemite and Wuksachi Lodge in Sequoia even though they aren't on the list of top ten. Ones I think should be on the top lists and are historically significant park lodges that I've visited and stayed at include Jackson Lake Lodge in the Grand Tetons, Shadow Lake in the Canadian Rockies, Phantom Ranch at the bottom of the Grand Canyon, Zion National Park Lodge, and Glacier National Lodge. I'm hoping for some input from friends as to others or how to visit the missing lodges.

Top national parks: While web surfing I found a listing of the top parks I've been to followed by those I now have on my list: Carlsbad Caverns, Grand Tetons, Mt Rushmore, Great Smokey Mountains, Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Acadia, Denali and Rocky Mountain. To add one day soon: Arches and Redwood National.

Some Lodges seen on this trip



Like Glacier NP, Mt Rainier used to have a red jammer bus too.



Two views from Paradise Inn of today, a view of how Paradise used to look, followed by a portion of Crystal Mountain where we stayed for the second portion of our trip.



Crystal Mountain has tried to have a Swiss Chalet look. The cabin/lodge is from Sunrise where there was planned a hotel resort but never developed by the parks into more than a visitor center. The views and hikes on top of Crystal Mountain were worthy of note and they had reason to be proud of their new Swiss gondola.

More pictures? The wildflowers were magnificent and prolific but how many wildflower pictures can you stand? The few days in Seattle gave me a zillion wonderful pictures but nothing particularly new other than my walk to Des Moines and the market. So in view of my being about five trips down with trip reports due, and in view of my having already made Seattle reports in the past, I'll stop here and offer a CD of pictures if this is a trip you want to see and hear more about.

Future? New Jersey hadn't picked up the pieces from the hurricane when I arrived home and we were still out of power for far too long. Now we're into October and FEMA is still in the area helping residents get on with their lives. Tom and I have no major repercussions except the now need for a full house generator (smile). After Mt Rainier and Seattle's unintended extended trip, Tom and I left on September 7th to Bordeaux and the Medoc Marathon; on September 10th to the Dordogne River Region of France and a unique 13th century modernized house sitting on the edge of a hill in Beynac overlooking the river. Then on September 17th we flew to the French Riviera aka the Cote de Azure where we had an apartment in Nice on the Promenade des Anglais and traveled the local area of Monaco, Villefrance, Cap Ferret, etc. I left on September 23rd to Berlin for their marathon while Tom left a couple days later to New Jersey. I was only home the last couple days of September in time to rearrange for a departure to Venice early in October and Dublin late October. Two weeks of body rebellion over some bad fish took a toll but didn't stop me and some would be envious of all the weight it removed from my body.

You think I'm crazy? Read on:

Group celebrates 'obsession' with national parks --I've been to many more national parks but nothing like covering all 394 of the national parks. This is hilarious! And here we thought it was marathoners who were maniacs but they have nothing compared to this! It again reminds me that just when we think we're a 'bag of chips' along comes something that puts me in my place: On June 21, Dan Seckinger, a 53-year-old radiologist, traveled 1,350 miles from his Miami home to an obscure War of 1812 battlefield in Michigan, completing a years-long quest: to visit each of the 394 units in the national park system. It wasn't easy. The odyssey took him 283,000 air miles. Factor in the additional highway and hiking miles, and he figures he's racked up enough mileage to travel to the moon and back. In doing so, Seckinger joins an elite group of people – as few as 19 – to visit every National Park Service park, battlefield, recreation area, historic site, monument, memorial, reserve and preserve – to name just some of the designations under which the 394 individual sites fall. Still, Seckinger's got nothing on Nancy Bandle, a Southern California travel agent who is on Round 2 of a 394-site visit and figures she's spent \$500,000 in her pursuit of national parks. Or Gary Pritchard, a retiree from Huntsville, Ala., who's also on his second go-round and has re-visited 279 park sites. This year. The three are members of the National Park Travelers Club, a group of national park fans – make that fanatics – that formed in 2003. About 200 of the club's members met in

Washington, D.C., over the weekend for their annual convention. It's the kind of gathering in which the word "obsession" is bound to come up. More than once. "Most of the people here have to be a little obsessive," acknowledges club co-founder Mike Brown, 42, a public works employee in Laurel Springs, N.J. "This is not an easy hobby. In fact, it's like a job," says Bandle, who has traveled 30,000 miles so far this year in park-related travels. "We're kind of an odd lot, but there's this camaraderie of people who have this passion," says Seckinger.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Passport to Your National Parks Program, which is, in part, the fuel that drives the NPTC. The program was devised in 1986 by Eastern National, a purveyor of interpretive materials sold at many NPS sites. Park visitors can buy passport booklets and collect stamps from most locales. And since some parks have multiple stamps (Yellowstone has 13, for instance) and stamps are sometimes retired, the quest to collect them becomes all the more challenging.

Some club members are avid hikers. Some are history buffs. Others enjoy the cultural side of the parks. "And then there are the obsessive-compulsives who just want stamps," says Bandle, who at last count had 2,900 distinct stamps. Her online handle is Stamp Queen. The passport/stamp program was conceived as a way to drive visitation to lesser-known park sites, says Eastern National's Joe Falco. Beyond Yellowstone, Grand Canyon and other high profile parks, NPS sites range from Indian effigy mounds to Japanese internment camps to historic houses and more.

Some of the more obscure park units lack facilities. One is on a military base with limited public hours. Some are accessible only by plane. One is on a road with no name, Falco says. That only enhances the cache of this sort of goal-oriented travel. Says Scott Stransky, 27, a Cambridge, Mass., scientist: Some people want to go to all the baseball stadiums or all the counties or all the highest points in all the states. We do parks. They do, indeed. NPTC members appear to be undeterred by logistical obstacles that would halt lesser fans in their tracks. Seckinger once left a Thanksgiving table in Illinois at 9 p.m. and drove 815 miles overnight to South Dakota for the sole purpose of visiting a Minute Man Missile Site (and adding a stamp to his passport). Drastic detours are nothing to Stransky, who once made a side trip from a meeting in Spokane, Wash., to San Jose, Calif., (900 miles) to visit a park. "Pretty much every trip I take is to a national park," says Stransky, whose current tally is 373 park units. Brown, who as a father of three notes, "I still have to take the occasional Disney trip," once took a six-week road trip using the Passport to Your National Parks as a guide. "My wife would wake up and I'd be, like, 600 miles off course," he recalls.

And then there are the truly remote sites, like Aniakchak Alaska National Monument and Preserve. It lies in an active volcano in a lake 120 miles from King Salmon (which, in turn, is 300 air miles from Anchorage). The cost of hiring a float plane from King Salmon to the park is \$950, says Bandle, who advises her park-obsessed clients to budget \$5,000 to \$10,000 to visit all the Alaska NPS sites. "It was a wonderful experience," Bandle says of her Aniakchak visit. "But there was nothing there."

Club members are quick with evaluations of their favorite parks (Yellowstone, Bryce, Yosemite, Denali get mentions). But they're hesitant to name names when it comes to talking about the spots they wouldn't go back to. "There isn't a park out there that doesn't have a redeeming feature," Bandle declares. Notes club president John Giorgis, "Some people do this for bragging rights. But most people do it because visiting the parks is its own reward. And when people discover the passport program, they go to places they never would have gone and discover all these forgotten stories of America."

Marathon friend's updates

Yolanda -- I have exciting news! I'm setting a Guinness World Record for "Greatest Mileage Run Daily in a Year". I must run (power walk) a minimum of 25 miles or more daily. Being the marathoner that I am, I'm power walking 26.2 miles or more daily. Today was day 48 and I only have 317 more days to go! My goal is to power walk 10,000 miles in 365 days. You can follow me daily on [twitter@walkingdiva365](https://twitter.com/walkingdiva365) or weekly on my new blog www.walkingdiva365.blogspot.com .

Diane and Annette were at the Old Fart's Marathon in Fallsburg Michigan where some took about ten hours to complete. It's said to get worse each year by design of the RD. Here's Annette's report: *Ok race today. Long story re our travels so more on that another time. So it was billed as being tough very very tough. From the get it was slippery rocks on the half dozen or more stream crossings. Then we hit the ropes! Descents were so steep there were 3 sections with lengths of heavy rope*



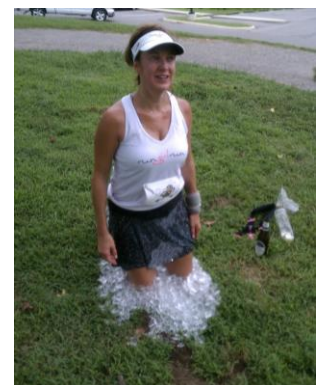
between the trees so u could get down. Still steep when rope ran out. Then it was a major crash for me at mile 5 my first ever over nothing. I hit fat thigh then turned sideways so I could continue crashing onto my right shoulder and finally slam my head into the ground. At that point I heard my neck bones do a crunch! Yep it hurts NOW. Ok onward. To the second loop well I was so busy goofing around w Mike at the covered bridge I failed to notice the sign for the 2nd loop. About 5 miles in Larry calls to ask if I m lost. Because Tom? An older guy (finished continents and was on Greece w you) said he did not see me ahead of him. Yes I was on first loop AGAIN. Called rd he said oh you re-doing the harder loop again! Sporadic rumbles have now become fully fledged thunder storm w lightening dropping temps, high winds and dark scary dark in woods. The trail got way slippery as well as sprouted many more run offs and I still had the last and steepest of the rope descents to do! Called Diane she is in the middle of it too only four miles ahead on correct loop! I m trying to call Larry to ask him to run toward me from finish as I now hear voices of at least two guys speaking Spanish. My only thought is I m alone out here w them somewhere on the Freaking woods in the pouring storm. Well I make it to the road and see Larry in Suburban I hop in and quickly assess I m only really cold and wet. I see Jim Simpson and hop out and finish w him but not before we again lose our way for 30 minutes as course markings are washed away. 8:02 baby. Diane finishes only after taking cover at the 15 cent veggie stand and calling Larry and RD too - she said trekking poles were needed! Diane blasted out for a sub 10 hour drive home but not before experiencing her first TRUCK STOP SHOWER and dinner and her realization that she indeed is one tough old fart. Oh and she learned from two gals that have run race each year that RD makes it harder each year. Winner cute young boy at 3:25.



Pic: Here's the picture she sent me earlier to sum up the day [sic – no need to spell correctly if it's in chalk, right?]

Judy on the same marathon from last year: I did the Fallsburg Marathon this past weekend and thought of you because I know you are an experienced hiker. I haven't done any hiking and didn't realize that this marathon was (as I called it) a DEEP WOODS HIKING TRAIL EXPERIENCE!! I laughed so much the first few miles because I thought it was funny that I had put myself in that situation...but I was not laughing the last few miles! It took me 9 HOURS AND 58 MINUTES to finish!!! was behind an experienced hiker (Dick West from Michigan, in case you know him) who is almost 70 and had a new pacemaker. He taught me a lot...how to hold onto the trees and vines to get up and down the STEEP hills and NOT TO EVER TAKE MY EYES OFF THE GROUND. I was alone in the woods the last 13 miles...a deer came up nearby and I said "oh please go away, because I'm really scared," and it must have worked because he left. The whole thing was an exciting challenging experience for me including...bugs, mud, ropes, snake, river, streams, wildflowers, poisonous plants, sticky outy tree roots, boulders to cross, invisible frogs popping and plopping into water... All considered, I had a strangely WONDERFUL time, even with the character building experience of dead battery in REALLY STUPID RENTAL CAR, after my 10 hours in the WILD (as far as compared to my previous life experiences). Take care. Late Bloomer, Judy

Diane on Tupelo Sep 4th and more: Today I ran Tupelo Mississippi, birth place of Elvis Presley and Jumpin Gene Simmons. Phil Minn graciously organized a wonderful pasta dinner complete with door prizes and an award ceremony. Having a photo enlarged taken from Blister in the Sun Marathon...I won.... "Miss Ice Princess" award.



And Phil had a delicious cake in honor of the race!



The forecast earlier in the week called for humid and high temps. We lucked out...AGAIN! With a 5am start we gathered the first few miles in the dark and humidity. As the miles went on the humidity was gone and very light sprinkles that we could barely feel let alone see. It was perfect! As Mother Nature played around the rain stopped the cloud cover was wonderful and the temps continued to drop. I enjoyed running the entire race with fun loving Jeff Venable and our new friend Shelly we picked up along the way. She is from Oklahoma and

new of Do Wacka Do!!! I was thrilled finally meeting someone who heard of this race after Larry Macon, Eugene DeFronzo and others never heard of such. And better yet...I may have her talked into joining me!!!

Okay, back to Tupelo...around mile 14 the rain picked up misting by mile 18 was pouring and a wee bit chilly! It let up again; our hands had just enough time to dry when the bottom fell out and sloshed through puddles toward the finish. Shelly had always wanted to finish holding hands with someone and Jeff and I were too happy to make her wish come a reality! The clock time was never a factor as we enjoyed much laughter having fun running in the rain. The laughter disappeared as I entered the showers to realize this was the worst I believe I had ever chaffed!!! OUCH!! Once again we were not disappointed with some unique medals and nice long sleeve cotton tee shirts. (Sorry, blurry photo.) I will say I do love the 14.2 (1/2) medal even more. If there is a next time...14.2 for me! Oh and the food was plentiful even up to the very end!



Seattle! For much longer than I intended

Sent: Sunday, August 28, 2011 9:10 AM - I know you all have overall news of Hurricane Irene but as many of you have asked about us, i.e. Tom in NJ, here's an update. Tom says that so far it appears that the storm is less than expected. I realize the backside of the storm could bring more wind but for now there is some relief in NJ/NY. Our area remains without electricity but despite a few glitches the generator is working and thus the sump pump is in action full time which is needed. Our generator covers much of the house. No large trees are down though many limbs are. In the middle of the night a neighbor strung some electrical cords to hook up to our generator and is now able to deal with their flooding issues too. Tornado warnings are issued for our area. Tom's computer and related cell booster are one of the few things unfortunately NOT hooked to the generator but he has a couple non-electric phones working.

TV reports say that there was another (small) earthquake! Also that NJ has absolutely record river levels with as much as 12' above flood level already. Some are not as lucky as we seem to be. They claim that there is so much power outage that it could remain so for days.

I of course am feeling guilty as I'm in the perfect weather of Seattle. Today will be my second day of touring – it's to see wine and chocolate of the region. I might even get my long run in tomorrow if I don't drink too much today. I found a wonderful French bistro that I'm on my way to again this evening.

A few of you are also in harm's way and if you can, please report in.

Later email update – I got teary eyed at the hurricane news

Maybe I'm travel weary; maybe I feel like a shit leaving Tom so long; maybe I worry about him. And friends being evacuated; maybe there's a hormone problem; I know there are lots of dirty clothes. Smile. Who knows but almost amazing when I realize that I got thru a huge hurricane alone with a second grade kid while in Taiwan in the 70s. Every neighbor evacuated by boat but me since I couldn't speak Mandarin and was afraid to go with them. Rats washed up and power and water was off for days. Tom was in Vietnam with no idea if I was one of hundreds dead and this all lasted for a few days. I had a bathtub of water which turned out to be good thinking and a saver. Wind blew out bricked in windows nearby. Oh, and I remember when I saw the rowboat evacuation that there were snakes as well as rats in the flood waters. So maybe I'm remembering that making me worry more for friends. I'm off to a tour so I deserve NO sympathy.

To Judy after her prescription for my upset – eat bread!

So I took a mini bus tour from 1 to 6pm and then got let out at the market and a little French bistro I've seen over the years. They have good French bread which I'd intended to seek out at the market (comfort food!) but it's too late for today. No matter I'll be back in the morning pre hooking up for my 3 pm wine and chocolate tour. In the interim I've ordered champagne and a country pate with foie gras so life should stay good. My bus tour was full of east coast stranded travelers. Thx for your fun messages. Flamingoes only being able to eat with their heads upside down was the cutest tidbit that made me smile.

On Monday when I might have returned home

There were over 10,000 flights canceled. United/Continental canceled 2,300 over the weekend and then another 437 on Monday – and that was only by morning's count. Thus my decision to stay until I had a firm flight and seat (first class at that) for Wednesday seemed prudent. When I made the decision first on Friday evening to take an early morning flight on Saturday, which later got canceled, I was told the airport was definitely closed through Sunday night and then longer if any damage. Tuesday flights were overbooked. Thus I had 5 nights in Seattle!

Monday morning the breakfast room was full of those who had spent hours at the airport and only had definite flights out on Thursday and Friday. Tuesday morning they were moving out because there was no room at most hotels.

Wet and rainy Seattle? NOT!

Seattle has a large number of rainy days but its light rain and almost misty and then there will be sunshine on the same day. Interesting? Not heavy rain. Did you know that Seattle isn't much on the real rain list? For amount of rain its number 41 of the lower 48. They are proud here of selling more sunglasses than anywhere else presumably to tourists who didn't know to bring them. Cleveland and Memphis are tops for total # of days of rain and rainiest.

New Jersey and Vermont damage

By Monday evening, hearing on one hand that the storm had been overhyped and on the other hand seeing and hearing of the NJ and VT damage – the two didn't match and in fact was pretty disconcerting to hear anyone say there was overhype. Tom remained at home without electricity and was still pumping water.

Itinerary

Fri Aug 19

3:25pm Depart Newark EWR via Continental #1681
6:19pm Arrive Seattle

Free hotel shuttle from airport to hotel

Hotel Choice Hotels Comfort Inn & Suites
19333 International Boulevard – Old Pacific Highway S
Sea Tac, WA 98188 Tele: 206 878 1100

Sun Aug 21 – Day 1

8:00am Start tour with Timberline - www.Timbertours.com – notes from 2010 so itinerary might change for 2011- be dressed for hiking

Daily Itinerary

Day 1	Van Trump Trailhead: Christine and Comet Falls--Van Trump Park	6 miles
Day 2	Skyline Trail to Muir Camp	10 miles
Day 3	Reflection Lakes from Paradise	6 miles
Day 4	Chinook Pass: Pacific Crest Trail--views of Naches Peak	5 miles
Day 5	Sunrise Area: Fryingpan Creek to Summerland Meadows	8 miles
Day 6	Sunrise Area:Burroughs Mountain Trail (to 1st or 2d Burrough, depending on snow conditions on the trail)	6 miles

Total Hiking Mileage - 41 miles

Optional/Modified Itinerary?

Day 1: Group assembles in Seattle; Van Trump Trailhead **6 miles**
Day 2: Skyline Trail - Nisqually Glacier **6 miles**
Day 3: Stevens Canyon / Ohanapecosh - Reflection Lakes (**3 miles**) and Tatoosh Peaks (**3miles**).
Day 4: Chinook Pass - Pacific Crest Trail - circle Naches Peak **5 miles**
Day 5: Fryingpan Section of the Wonderland Trail **9 miles**
Day 6: Mt Freeman Fire Lookout **5 miles**

Of all the mighty volcanoes of the Cascade Range, extending from southern British Columbia through northern California, none rise and dominate the horizon as does Mt. Rainier. Rising from the Cascade foothills of central Washington, Rainier easily is the tallest of the High Cascade peaks. At 14,411 feet, Rainier is almost 300 feet higher than Shasta, the only other Cascade volcano exceeding 13,000 feet. On the other hand, as impressive as it is, Rainier is only one of more than 400 volcanoes that comprise the Ring of Fire that encircles the Pacific Ocean.

The fact that Rainier rises to its lofty height virtually from sea level accounts for the incredible diversity of habitats of both vegetation and wildlife that thrive on the mountain. Temperate rain forests at lower elevations give way to lush subalpine forests, tundra, and ultimately permanent snowfields and glaciers as elevation increases. Thanks to conservationists, including John Muir, Congress enacted the necessary legislation on March 2, 1899, creating Mt. Rainier National Park, our fifth national park.

After years of cycling the slopes of Rainier, Timberline finally added this magnificent jewel to our hiking program. We've chosen a mid-August date as the time when most, if not all of the snow, has melted from our planned trails and the mosquitoes are in full retreat.

We'll assemble early morning of Day 1 and head directly to Rainier's western entrance at Nisqually. From the Van Trump Trailhead, we'll hike through the forest, initially to views of Christine and spectacular Comet Falls, one of the park's tallest at 130-feet. We'll then climb beyond Comet to

the flower-filled meadows of Van Trump Park, with its striking views of Rainier and the Tatoosh Range (6 miles). Its then on to Paradise, where we'll spend our first of two overnights at the historic Paradise Lodge.

Hotel Paradise Lodge –2 nights
PO Box 108, Ashford WA 98304 Tele: 360-569-2275

Mon Aug 22 – Day 2

Day 2, we'll hike from our lodge along the Skyline Trail, likely the park's most popular hike, and for good reason. A solid climb early into the hike and we're beyond timberline where the spectacular vistas reside, and Rainier is in our face at all times. A short spur trail offers an irresistible opportunity to view Nisqually Glacier, before we begin our descent back to Paradise (6 miles).

Tue Aug 23 – Day 3

We'll again begin our hike on Day 3 from Paradise, this time descending approximately 1,200' to Reflection Lakes. As you may have guessed, what goes down ultimately must come up as we climb back to our trailhead at Paradise. A visit to Narada Falls is an intriguing option along the way (6 miles). We'll leave the Paradise region mid-afternoon and van shuttle to the park's eastern perimeter, where we'll spend our final three nights at the Crystal Mountain resort.

Hotel Quicksilver at Crystal Mountain – 3 nights
33818 Crystal Mountain Blvd, Crystal Mountain, WA 98022 Tele: 360-663-2262

Wed Aug 24 – Day 4

Early morning of Day 4, we'll shuttle to Chinook Pass, just beyond the park's eastern boundary. We'll join the Pacific Crest Trail just east of the pass as part of a grand loop that encircles Naches Peak (6,452'). Stunning views of Rainier and many of the other dominant peaks of the eastern slope highlight our return to our trailhead (5 miles).

Thu Aug 25 – Day 5

Day 5, we'll re-enter the park through the White River Station toward Sunrise. Our focus for this day is a section of the famed Wonderland Trail, the 90-mile epic track that encircles Rainier. We'll hike the Fryingpan Creek section to the subalpine meadows of Summerland and beyond into the rocky alpine above to the edge of the snowfields (9 miles).

Fri Aug 26 – Day 6

Following a final night at Crystal Mountain, we'll drive to road's end at Sunrise and hike beyond timberline to Frozen Lake and on to the First and Second Burroughs, trail conditions permitting. The views of Rainier throughout this hike are incredible along a trail that overlooks the entire expanse of the park's northern section including snow-clad Mt. Baker, well to the north of Rainier—all in all, a dramatic conclusion to our week-long engagement with this grand mountain (6 miles).

By 5:00pm End of hike and deliver back to hotel

Hotel Choice Hotels Comfort Inn & Suites
19333 International Boulevard – Old Pacific Highway S
Sea Tac, WA 98188 Tele: 206 878 1100

Moved to Fairfield Inn under a Marriott family rate thank heavens since as it turned out I had to stay five nights!

Sat Aug 27

10:55am Depart Seattle SEA via Continental #1680
6:55pm Arrive Newark

Obviously this didn't happen and I ended up getting home on Wednesday night. Others were not even as lucky and had to keep seeking out hotels since they were full with abandoned travelers who couldn't get home to the East Coast.