

Tacoma to Haines on Sept. 1

Tacoma was another town without a brewpub; had a heavy talapia dinner at IHOP and found out what a Jack in the Box Breakfast Bowl was in the morning. Motel 6 does have wifi for an extra fee, which allowed me to do some more research and load some files. Found the location of the famous Seattle REI and got there without too much trouble, in spite of road work. This REI is really impressive with test trails and wooden walkways. Picked up a bicycle pump that converts into a small floor pump and some long underwear for going to Pt. Barrow. I forgot to get a full length sleeping pad, which I would regret on the ferry.

Next went to Aurora Suzuki which is pretty well equipped. Got a spare chain and a rear axle nut. Up until the last minute I keep on remembering things I forgot. I didn't replace the rear tire until the Saturday before I took off. Overlooked the chain which does have some miles on it. Went for the cheap chain since I just want a spare and I don't know how long I'll keep the bike after I get home. The current chain is still tight, in fact I was worried since the chain was getting tight. Because of that I got the spare axle nut I'm using a bigger one that I got at the hardware that is pretty strong but isn't hardened. The shop didn't have a tire pressure gauge so I had to go a couple of blocks to an auto parts store. My fancy digital tire pressure gauge had died the night before, so I needed a replacement. I got a conventional stick type one and a RV one with a remote dial and a valve to hold the pressure.



Finally got going to Bellingham. Stopped at McDonalds for a salad for lunch. Weather kept switching between warm and cold, finally starting to drizzle and finally pour when I pulled off I-5 at Bellingham. I got to the ticket office with a half hour to spare, but ended up waiting in the vehicle line for a couple of hours. Fortunately, they let us wait under an overhang, and the rain eventually stopped and the sun came out anyway. While waiting I pumped up the tires with my new pump and checked the pressure



with the RV gauge. Both worked well and I got the pressure up to 40psi since it had dropped in both tires, both new, to 35psi. Also lubed the chain back at a gas station so the bike wouldn't need service in Haines, just a gallon of gas.

Waiting in line was a gentleman from a Harley dealership who was going to load a bike on the ferry for a customer in Sitka. Also there was a couple with bikes going to Skagway. The husband had an 04 V-Strom like mine, but a lot cleaner. Finally got on the ferry and got to use my tie downs I bought in Anchorage 20 years ago. Also had to use a couple of tie downs from the ferry for the rear end. I asked a worker and he confirmed that the ferries used to leave directly from Seattle, not Bellingham. I later checked the slides I had scanned



Got a tent spot behind the solarium, which surprised me. However, the ferry in general was pretty empty. This time I brought a big roll of duct tape to secure the tent guide



lines. Pretty windy the first night, but woke up to a spectacular morning, but with a stiff back since the half-length ultra-light Thermarest I brought wasn't up the task, as I had known. Unlike the first trip, the theory was that camping would only be a back-up since I'd try to stay in motels or hostels as much as possible. However, I do have plans to tent camp in Anchorage at a hostel, so I'll still need to look for another pad.

First full day on the ferry involved a couple of open water crossings; the first was pretty rough. Unlike the first

trip, I turned pretty green and skipped lunch and only had a bowl of onion soup for dinner. The second full day I made up for it by having both lunch and dinner in the dining room. Lunch, a buffet, was good, but the salmon at dinner was a little on the dry side.

Except for sleeping, life on the ferry isn't bad. There are showers and they aren't crowded like last time since the ferry is so empty. Also able to wash my clothes and I finally figured out how to rig a clothesline inside of my tent that is pretty effective. On the road I use the back of my bike as a dryer. There are three lounges besides the cafeteria where you can hang out. The solarium itself is kind of crowded, but I found a perch there when I was seasick. The cafeteria does give out free ice and hot water. There is AC power for the laptop and recharging the cell phone, but no internet access. I asked the purser and he said it was off, so I guess there is supposed to be one. There is an intranet, but it doesn't connect to the internet.



When I did this trip 20 years ago, I came up 101, which makes sense now after enduring the heat of I-5. I started that trip with a fever, and I had to stop at King City to recover, which actually happened fairly quickly. This time I'm fighting



something happening in my sinuses. Also my trouble sleeping means I have trouble staying awake during the day. I've been taking a lot of breaks on the road, especially since I had saddle sores. The first full day was a rehearsal for going from Haines to Tok or Glenallen. I tried keeping my speed down to simulate what I would have to do on Alaskan roads.

I noticed that Ketchikan didn't look as I remembered. I checked Mom & Dad's digitized slides and their photos

confirmed my suspicions. I didn't bother getting off at Ketchikan. It has really been developed. I wanted to get off at Wrangell, but we arrived late and I decided to not bother trying. I did get off at St. Petersburg for a couple of minutes, but found that I had to go back through security to get back on the ferry. Twenty years ago, I don't think it was as formal.



Haines wasn't too much bigger than I remembered. Landing and getting off wasn't too challenging. However, I found that the flightseeing arrangements hadn't worked out. I bought a better sleeping pad in town in case I had to do more camping. The information



center was very helpful and even had of list of things on the road to Haines Junction. I had lunch at one of the recommended establishments and it turned out to be very good, and had a bakery where I bought a couple of ornate bagels for the road as well. I went over to the Halsingland Hotel and found that I could still cancel my reservation. The lady at the desk was very nice. The hotel was in a former building of old Fort Seward, and it was an interesting site; I took some photos there.

About 2PM I finally got refueled, repacked and semi-ready for rain, and headed off to Haines Junction. A gentleman at the gas station said that winter was arriving two weeks early. The ride was a little cold and damp going up to the pass over the mountains. A 52 cent cup of coffeed at the 33 mile cafe was a welcome break, Another customer there said the best ride he'd been on was the where he never made it to his destination.



Once over the mountains it was warmer and drier, at least for the moment. Not much in Haines Junction, but I decided to go for a hotel. I went for the AAA approved one instead of trying my luck with the bargain one. The campgrounds looked like they were already shut down. I learned from Canadian TV that a lot of holiday facilities shut down for Return to School Day Sept. 2. Getting to Haines was a good thing if I really wanted to get to Valdez to catch the ferry to Whittier. If I had gone flightseeing, I would have been cutting it really tight. It would have been tough riding, as I later found out I celebrated by having another salmon dinner at the local restaurant for a high price. Better than the ferry, but still not like home.



