

Haines Junction to Valdez, Sept 3, 2008

It had been warm in Haines Junction the night before. The morning of the second there was frost on my bike and no more mosquitoes. The weather does change quickly. Also, I found that on Sept 2 a lot of facilities in the Yukon at least shut down on Sept 2, except for gasoline and some groceries.



Sept.2 is when the kids return to school and the holiday season is officially over. The hotel had been a good idea. I'd recharged the batteries of my various digital devices and washed my clothes as well.

It was bitter cold in the morning, with my right fingers hurting, as they do when they get too cold after I froze them cross country skiing. Need to look for better gloves at the Anchorage REI, and thicker socks. Fortunately, I had found the Goretex

pants that fit over my riding pants, which kept my legs warm. I was missing them on the ride up to Haines Junction.



The Kluane was absolutely gorgeous. Better than I remember it, maybe because the colors are changing now. The vibrancy of the scenery died down as we neared the border. Going wasn't that quick because of all the road work. I got in lots of practice riding gravel, which gave me an idea of how the bike might handle the Top of the World Highway.

The Suzuki was very stable, even overloaded as it was. Even had my nose freeze up

when we crossed one river in a construction caravan and I'd left my faceshield up. I had to work my nose with my hand to get feeling back into it. Also couldn't find lunch since everything was closed.

The border crossing wasn't too bad, easier than the one at the Canadian border the day before. On the US side I bought a banana and a Hostess apple pie for lunch at a Native American store. After that there were numerous construction delays on the road to Tok



and more escorted caravans Rolling towards Tok the bridge over the Nenana River woke up a memory of crossing it on the R100S 20 years ago. By Tok junction it had warmed up to shirt sleeve weather, which gave me some hope for the trip. I had a sandwich at Tok and went on the 141 miles towards Glenallen, but stopped for gas in Gukona at 6:15.

Good thing I did because the gas stations out there tend to close early. After talking to the owner of the gas station at Gukona I decided to drive on the 126 miles to Valdez since I decided I didn't want to cross the Thomson Pass in the morning. A good idea, it turned out. The scenery as I passed the Wrangell-St. Elias was again spectacular.

It was drizzling up to the pass and lightly raining into Valdez, and definitely cold. The scenery near the pass was spectacular, as impressive as the Kluane in Canada. It was still light enough to see the Washington Glacier, even though it was 8PM. I got into town at 8:30PM and stopped at the Best Western for a ridiculous rate. A motorcyclist late at night in the rain, they knew they had me. At least the room was dry and I felt better after a light dinner of soup and salad at the Edgewater Grill, where the waitress was from Turkey.

