

Welcome to Sockeye Cycle! The following is a brief outline of information frequently covered on tour. You will want to have a good knowledge of these basics before arriving in Skagway. Over the course of the season, you will be expected to continue learning more fun and interesting things about our home to share with coworkers and guests.

1) Climate, Geography, and Geology

- a) Southeast Alaska encompasses the mainland and thousands of islands of the Alaska Panhandle, bounded by Dixon Entrance in the south and Yakutat Bay in the north
- b) Characterized by high annual rainfall and, at low elevations, lush forests
 - i) Largest contiguous temperate rainforest in the world
 - ii) Contains about 1/3rd of world's remaining old-growth temperate rainforest
- c) 20 million of SEAK's 22 million acres are publicly owned
- d) The Tongass National Forest is 17 million acres (larger than West Virginia)
 - i) 40% of the Tongass is non-forest: rock, ice, snow, brush, alpine tundra, muskeg, wetlands, etc.
 - ii) Only 4% of the Tongass is high-volume old-growth forest; over ½ has already been logged
 - (1) Old-growth forests are multi-aged forests (old and young trees) that have obtained a unique set of ecological characteristics and are at least 250 years old in Southeast Alaska
 - (2) Old-growth forest serves as a "protector" of biomass and biodiversity, providing critical year-round habitat and ecosystem services
- e) The Wisconsin Glaciation (about 20,000 years ago) completely reshaped Southeast Alaska's topography
 - i) A glacier is a flowing mass of ice
 - (1) Created when accumulation exceeds ablation
 - ii) A fjord is a submarine glacier valley
 - (1) Lynn Canal is one of North America's longest and deepest fjords

2) History

- a) Alaska History
 - i) Alaska was a colonial possession of Russia from 1741 – 1867
 - (1) The Russian capital was New Archangel, which is present-day Sitka
 - ii) The United States bought Alaska from Russia in 1867 for 2 cents per acre, totaling \$7.2million (\$120million in 2013 dollars)
 - iii) In 1906, the capital was moved from Sitka to Juneau, due to Sitka's declining economy and a mining boom in Juneau
 - iv) Alaska became a state in 1959
- b) Gold Rush History
 - i) Klondike Gold Rush of 1897-1898 brought over 100,000 gold seekers known as "stampedeers" to Alaska and Canada
 - (1) Gold discovered on Bonanza Creek, a tributary of the Klondike River, in August 1896 by George Carmack

- (2) The first wave of stampederers arrived in 1897, reaching its peak in 1898
 - (3) The Klondike Gold Rush fizzled by 1900
 - ii) There were several different routes to Klondike; Skagway and Dyea were merely staging grounds for the most popular, and least costly, routes to the gold fields, the Chilkoot Trail and the White Pass Trail
 - (1) A typical stamperder traveled about 1,000 miles by steamboat from Seattle to Skagway or Dyea
 - (2) Stampederers would hike either 33 miles (Chilkoot Trail) or 45 miles (White Pass Trail), depending upon the trail they chose
 - (3) Stampederers carried 2,000 pounds of supplies (enough for one year) over the trail to comply with the Canadian "Ton of Goods" law
 - (4) Either trail would take an average man 3-4 months to complete
 - (5) Most hiking was done between February and May to coincide with spring thaw on Lake Bennett
 - (6) Upon reaching Lake Bennett and completing the trail, stampederers would build rafts and float 560 miles to the Klondike
 - (a) About 100,000 stampederers started for gold fields from Skagway and Dyea
 - (b) Only 30,000-40,000 crossed White Pass Trail or Chilkoot Trail
 - (c) About 15,000-20,000 reached Dawson City
 - (d) A few thousand found gold
 - (e) Only about 100 struck it rich
 - (7) Most of the best claims were already staked before the stampederers arrived in the Klondike; many worked for wages on others' claims
 - (8) Many people who became wealthy "mined the miners" selling goods and services to stampederers
 - iii) Railroad and Gold Rush Legacy
 - (1) The White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad (WPYR) was completed in 1900 after only 2 years, 2 months, and 2 days of construction
 - (a) Skagway was chosen as the terminus of the WPYR because of its deepwater port; this is the reason Skagway still exists today
 - (b) Dyea was abandoned after completion of the WPYR
 - (2) Stampederers spent more money trying to find gold than the value of the gold extracted from the ground
 - (3) Caused immense environmental damage, especially to the fragile Interior by cutting down forests, overhunting game, overfishing, and water contamination
 - (4) Klondike Gold Rush brought unprecedented levels of interest, investment, and infrastructure to Alaska
- 3) Native Culture
- a) Human occupation of Southeast Alaska dates back about 10,000 years
 - b) Southeast Alaska has supported three distinct groups of Natives: Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian; the Interior supports Tlingit and Athabaskans
 - i) The Tlingit were and still are the most populous group
 - ii) Present day Native population in SE AK is about 14,000

- c) The main elements of Northwest Coast culture (woodworking, sedentism, dependence upon salmon, social stratification, wealth and art) emerged between 2,000 and 4,000 years ago
- d) The passage of the Alaskan Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) in 1971 extinguished long-standing native land claims and changed Native culture
 - i) Alaska Natives received 148.5million acres of land (about 1/9th of Alaska) and \$962.5million to set up 13 regional and over 200 village for-profit economic development corporations
 - (1) Sealaska Corporation is based in Juneau and owned primarily by Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian
 - ii) ANCSA was spurred by the discovery of oil in Prudhoe Bay; Alaskan Natives had demanded resolution to their land claims since the Alaska Purchase
- e) The Tlingit
 - i) The Tlingit are considered one of the most complex indigenous hunting and gathering societies in North America
 - ii) Salmon are cornerstone of Tlingit culture
 - iii) Tlingits are well-known for beautiful art such as bentwood boxes and Chilkat blankets and lively celebrations called potlatches
 - (1) Potlatches are ceremonial parties featuring feasts, singing, dancing, storytelling and can last for weeks
 - (a) Thrown for a number of reasons: celebrating a marriage, honoring the deceased, erecting a totem pole, dedicating a new house, etc.
 - (b) The success of a potlatch was measured by the amount of wealth distributed to guests
 - iv) Local Tlingit use
 - (1) Chilkoot and Chilkat clans out of Klukwan utilized area around Skagway
 - (2) Dyea ("to pack" in Tlingit)
 - (a) Fish camp for eulachon (small fish that yields highly prized oil) and staging ground for trade with the Interior via the Chilkoot Trail
 - (b) Traded eulachon oil as well as salmon, smoked cockles, and other items from the sea for moose or caribou hides or western redcedars
 - (3) Skagway ("home of the north wind" in Tlingit)
 - (a) Minimal Tlingit presence due to small salmon run and harsh winter weather
 - (b) Only used sparingly for berry picking and mountain goat hunting
 - (4) Klukwan, about 20 miles from Haines, is the nearest remaining Tlingit village, with about 150 residents today
- 4) Plants and Wildlife
 - a) Sitka Spruce
 - i) Fast-growing conifer with high strength-to-weight ratio
 - ii) Sharp, round needles
 - iii) Alaska's state tree

- iv) From the 1950's to the 1990's, was logged primarily in clear cuts to provide timber for Alaska's pulp industry
- b) Western Hemlock
 - i) Shade-tolerant conifer
 - ii) Drooping crown, soft, flat needles
 - iii) Climax species in mature SEAK forests
- c) Red Alder
 - i) Deciduous tree, to 50'. Alternate leaves, prominent catkins.
 - ii) "Pioneer" species found in disturbed mineral soil, often along streambeds or in avalanche chutes
 - iii) Nitrogen fixer
- d) Devil's Club
 - i) Shrub growing to 10 feet, large (up to 12") maple-like leaves with 7-9 toothed lobes. Sweetish odor. Leaves and stems covered with sharp spines. Blooms in June.
 - ii) Forms dense patches that are difficult for backcountry hikers to negotiate
 - iii) In early spring, protein-rich leaves may be eaten before spines form on buds. Bright red berries are considered toxic.
 - iv) Numerous medicinal uses
- e) Fireweed
 - i) Perennial, to 5', leaves alternate. Typically blooms in early July.
 - ii) Magenta flowers first open at base of stalk, marking beginning of summer and continue to bloom toward the stalk's terminus
 - iii) Common throughout region, especially along old roads, railways, and old burns (hence the name)
 - iv) Territorial flower of Yukon Territory
 - v) Edible in all stages of growth
- f) Salmon
 - i) Five species of pacific salmon, each with several colloquial names
 - (1) King (Chinook)
 - (2) Silver (Coho)
 - (3) Sockeye (Red)
 - (4) Chum (Dog or Keta)
 - (5) Pink (Humpback)
 - ii) Anadromous: born in freshwater, then live at sea, and return to freshwater en masse to spawn (known as a run)
 - iii) Each species runs at a different time of year and to a different type of habitat
 - (1) King, chum, silver, and pink salmon are found in the Taiya River in Dyea, with pinks being by far the most abundant
 - (2) Pullen Creek in Skagway has pink salmon and hatchery kings
 - iv) Salmon are essential to Southeast Alaska: they were the basis of traditional Native subsistence, nourish our forests and wildlife, and form the backbone of the modern Southeast Alaska economy
- g) Brown Bear
 - i) Can reach sizes of 9' and 1,400 lbs

- ii) Brown bears and grizzly bears are the same species; the distinction is geographic
 - (1) Brown bears live on the coast
 - (2) Grizzlies live on the interior
 - (a) Brown bears tend to be larger as their diets are higher in fat and protein due to salmon
 - iii) Distinguished from black bears by large muscular hump between front shoulders (for digging), “teddy bear” face, and closely-spaced toes with long claws for digging
 - iv) Omnivorous, though salmon is the most important element in diet
 - h) Black Bear
 - i) Can reach sizes of 6' and 600 lbs
 - (1) 200-300 lbs is more typical
 - ii) Distinguished from brown bears by its “straight” face, and wider-spaced toes and short claws for climbing; does not have muscular hump between shoulders
 - iii) Do not use color to differentiate between brown and black bears; black bears can be cinnamon or tan
- 5) Current Environmental Issues
- a) Our Conservation Efforts
 - i) Sockeye Cycle Co. works to protect Alaska through our water bottle program. We give our guests water bottles in exchange for donations to the Alaska Conservation Foundation. The company matches each donation dollar-for-dollar. In 2012, our guests donated over \$10,000 dollars!
 - b) Pebble Mine
 - i) Proposed copper, gold, and molybdenum mine in the Bristol Bay region
 - ii) Bristol Bay is home to the largest wild sockeye salmon run in the world (40 million fish annually) and generates between \$300million and \$500million annually
 - iii) The mine would be one of the largest in the world, covering about 28 sq. miles, with an extraction pit 4,000 ft deep and 3.2 miles wide
 - iv) Toxic waste, called tailings, would have to be stored indefinitely behind dams in one of the most seismically active areas in the world
 - v) In September 2013, British mining company Anglo American withdrew from the project after \$541million of investment, leaving Canadian company Northern Dynasty as the sole owner of the prospect
 - c) Tongass 77
 - i) Salmon and trout support 11% of regional jobs and contribute nearly \$1billion to the economy annually
 - ii) The Tongass is home to over 17,000 miles of clean, undammed streams, rivers, and lakes that provide habitat for salmonids
 - iii) Approximately 65% of Tongass watersheds are not protected at the federal level

- iv) The Tongass 77 aims to have the US Forest Service designate the 77 best salmonid watersheds as LUD II; that is, managed preferentially for fisheries
- v) Logging and development are the primary threats to salmonid habitat
- vi) Known locally as "The Road"