## The Third Voyage of Lumina

## Out into the wilds

## Post 2

Unlike last year where we were predominantly passing through uninhabited lands for the most part, Alaska is relatively busy especially near to the settlements that have good air or road communications with Anchorage and the rest of the world. After fishing, the other large industry is tourism and they have made the best use of their environment to cater for all disciplines whether it be from the hunting, shooting, fishing types or those more interested in keeping the the natural flora and fauna alive for its



Kodiak harbour full with fishing boats

own sake rather than as a trophy or some meals in the freezer. The map is littered with "wilderness" this or that lodge and they seem to cater from the well heeled to the stupidly rich based on the prices shown in the internet. You would get there usually via their own fast boat from the nearest settlement like Kodiak for instance or for the more distant or up market ones on a float plane. The dining experience is often emphasised but when you look at the prices I would expect something pretty fancy. However, I suppose remoteness is expensive, and as it was last year on the North West Passage where you could go on cruises on the same vessels that

would be found in ports in Norway or Scotland but costing twice as much. Its much the same for us I suppose and whilst our hero Bob might have sailed the world in a very reasonably priced boat, Lumina has a reasonable amount of the family silver invested as well, although of course that's really an investment, Amy!

We left Kodiak and our first anchorage was on an island that formed part of a channel through to the inside of Kodiak island. It suited us well as we needed the tide to be right for the next passage over to the mainland. We made a dinghy expedition up to the head of the inlet past a number of cabins and various signs on the shore about fishing, at the end you could see the salmon breaking the surface of the water, could have got them if we had a net (might have been illegal though). Sport fishing is a big thing here but heavily regulated as well. The following morning we made it through the narrow channel with the tide but out the other side the wind was strongly against us so we anchored up for the rest of the day behind another island. Geographic Harbour on the mainland side was our real destination and we made it the next day with a bit of help from the engine. Winds were still not really favourable so the next day we relocated to another spot in this maze of inlets and islands. I did not manage to find out why its called Geo-

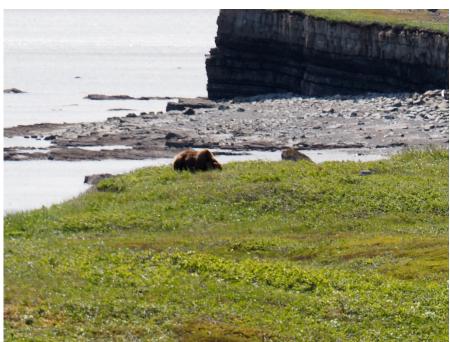
graphic Harbour but it is famed for its bear population although we did not see many until we were on the way out—maybe the wind and rain kept them sheltered somewhere in the undergrowth.

We then had a couple of easy sails eastward along the mainland coast with windy but safe anchorages in quite lovely bays. At the second we took the dinghy ashore to stretch our legs, walked up the beach where there was a small stream and turned to the right up the bank to get a view. As we neared the top

we turned round to admire the view and over on the other side of the little valley was one of those unmistakable brown hairy rocks. We were down wind and only about a hundred yards away and it took no notice of us. I am not sure if it noticed us or not but we did wonder what would have happened if we had



We didn't quite dry out at Geographic Harbour



That's a strange brown rock over there....

turned to climb up the other side only to come face to face with a bear...

I had always fancied going to Homer and it had been on our list of potential haul out locations last year. We had been in contact with the harbour but they were not particularly favourable to another yacht coming in as they were completely rammed with fishing boats waiting for the season to start in a few days. We therefore made our way across to the Kenai Peninsula and the little village of Seldovia and were glad we did. With a friendly call on the radio we were directed to a berth next to a large fishing boat and then saw our

friends Gerd and Melissa from Thor heading down the pontoon to take our lines. They had left their boat in Homer over winter and had come here for some peace in a smaller place.

Seldovia, like most places was affected by the 1964 earthquake, however, here it was the land drop that was the problem rather than the quake itself or the tsunami as at Kodiak. Around the harbour in Seldovia



Our "Guardian" in Seldovia Harbour

the land dropped by 4 feet. As all the buildings were on piles connected by a boardwalk this was now a serious problem with flooding

on high tides. The decision was taken to demolish what had survived the earthquake and bring in tons of rock to make a new harbour and waterfront. Thus the very practical harbour that we see today was formed but whilst the town looks quite pretty, like Kodiak it is obviously all from a certain age and lost the

famous boardwalk. Today just a little survives in an inlet just round the corner from the harbour.

I am not sure if its these remote places where they don't see an awful lot of tourists but its amazing how many coincidences we seem to find. I think it was maybe the boat surveyor who was talking to her neighbour about us and it turned out that he was the one that had given us a lift back to the harbour from Walmart in October. Now here in Seldovia we are berthed net to the biggest fishing boat in



How Seldovia would have looked before the earthquake—the last remaining bit of boardwalk, and the new very functional village and harbour

the harbour. I get talking to the skipper about Kodiak and being next to the project boat with the folks from Halibut Cove, just down the coast. Now I remember being told how the skipper of the boat in Kodiak had ended up in a liferaft in the Bering Sea after a boat sunk and it turned out that this guy



The grocery store was full of character though

was the one who picked them up. I had an interesting boat tour of the "Guardian" and stood corrected that it was not actually a fishing boat, although they did do some crab fishing with it. It is in fact a tender, not in a dinghy sense but they go out to the fishing grounds, take fish from the fishing boats, weigh



We explored the Otterbahn trail—I don't think it was really designed for bikes though, the first part had a rope to help you climb up the rocks.

It was one of those occasions when you just knew the clues were all there at the start!!



and sort it and place it in their refrigerated tanks and deliver it back to the processing plants. They would also have food stocks on board that they would sell to the fishing boats. All a complicated interwoven



Seldovia is not a busy place in the evening

system that appears to work, although unfortunately you do not see many newish boats around which is a symptom of a profit short industry, a bit like the UK glasshouse sector....

Our final evening in Seldovia was spent in the Linwood Bar and Grill with Gerd and Melissa from Thor. It was not quite the same "Bar and Grill as one would find along the promenade in Cheltenham but a typical Alaskan drinking establishment with plenty of both sexes in wellington boots although I guess they are called something different here! The evening started off qui-

etly but then the karaoke started. It was a bit lack lustre at first but after the already

well lubricated wedding party arrived complete with the bride in a big white dress it still did not improve although they did try hard!

In our first week away from the harbour in Kodiak we have now seen it all as far as the wilderness lodge thing goes, and this last place we were recommended to visit, Halibut Cove, epitomises the scene. Halibut cove is an almost landlocked bay with an island on one side, a narrow entrance and a drying reef closing the other end. The perfect anchorage indeed and so it is. Our boatyard neighbours on their pro-

ject fishing boat hail from here but unfortunately they are a dying breed in this place. There are just a handful of fishing boats still operating there and the rest of the houses have been turned into either multi million dollar vacation homes or Wilderness Lodges. We did see one advertised and you could stay there for \$1500 per person per night based on two sharing and a minimum of 3 nights. Now most islands and remote communities have a basic network of roads or paths where you would maybe find hand painted signs with some home Nice property in Halibut Cove but "Get orrf my land"

made jam or knitwear for sale but



not here, each place seemed to not want any communication with the rest of the island, on land you were immediately faced with signs indicating you were not welcome at all to walk the path. It was however a fine anchorage but first thing the next morning we set off to go across to Homer about 6 miles across the inlet. We had been trying to get in for several days but were given a slip for a short day tripwith the added advantage of no charge as well, so our opinion of Homer harbour was restored. The fishing season starts in a few days when all the fishing boats will leave and there will suddenly be plenty of room for visitors.



Homer really is at the end of the road

There are two Homers, Homer spit which is where the harbour is and (not surprisingly) is on the end of the spit. Homer town is about 4 miles away at the landward end of the spit and unfortunately we had thought that the chandlers was at the harbour, alas it was in the town and not fancying a two way taxi we decided that the new genoa lines we bought in Kodiak which were already fraying could wait till we get to Seward or further on. We did however get Carol a new fishing reel as the old one had just about had it—must be all the big fish she has been reeling in. We then walked back towards the Salty Dawg saloon, a bit of a

famous place round here and certainly not one to just pass by. On entering the bar it appeared almost dark but soon your eyes got accustomed to the gloom and you could make out the whole ceiling and walls plastered in dollar bills with messages on them. It was only 11.30am and didn't really seem like

beer time but they did a nice coffee—a half pint of milky coffee with enhancements. I have never felt the effects of a coffee before and it certainly wasn't the caffeine, maybe something to do with the added ingredients like brandy and kahlua.

Homer is literally at the end of the road, in fact it might be the furthest west you can drive in the US north American road system. The road was busy with people in their RVs going to the end and back and this together with the cruise ship that had let several thousand people get a run ashore gave the place a special feel. We struck up a conversation with a



Its always dusk in the Salty Dawg Saloon and we had a drink with a fellow traveller who had driven from Florida

chap in the bar who had driven all the way from Florida. We were impressed with his drive and he was equally with our voyage from England. Its strange that he is confined to the road network and we are to the water. Most of the time the two disciplines do not meet and indeed this would be the only time since Tuktoyuktuk in Northern Canada that we have touched mainland Americas road network. Everywhere else has been either an island or an isolated bit of road like at Nome.

As I write this evening we are once again at anchor, just across the bay from Homer. They have really

interesting tides here, this evening the low tide is nearly two metres higher than it will be tomorrow morning. As we have 1.9m beneath the keel just now at 8pm I think an early start might be prudent as low tide is 0830 tomorrow.

I hope this has interested and enlightened your day as writing it has mine. I must admit that when we started this year it did seem a bit flat as we don't have that big goal to achieve this year but now we are getting into the groove and relaxing into the rhythm of the cruising life.

Best Wishes to all from

Tim and Carol on the good ship Lumina

Website with all the old blogs