

Seagate and Wild Blue Alaska Cruise – Wednesday, June 11, 2008



Well this should be an interesting day as we attempt to see a glacier up close. We start early at 6AM to catch the flood tide into the Arm.

(← *“Thar She Blows” just off the port beam. We get a whale of a send off as we exit the Tracy Arm Cove.*)

Flood current is the result of a rising tide, causing a current, especially in narrow channels, to flow inward from the sea. Ebb is the currents associated with the tide falling, or Ebb tide. However, there is so much fresh water always flowing out of Tracy Arm, that a perpetual “ebb” current exists, which can only be reduced by the flood current, never overcome. Furthermore this constant ebb flow pushes the ice bergs out of Tracy Arm, into Stephens Passage and beyond.



(← *Wonder where these pretty ice bergs will end up? I mean before they melt of course.*)



It’s a 2-hour cruise up to the glacier and we’re working against a 1-knot ebb current. Of course the further we go, the more ice we encounter. But oh they’re so pretty!



(← This one has ears. Can we take it home?)



About 3 miles from the glacier face, the Arm becomes thick with ice. House-sized to ten-pound ice-block sized, all flowing slowly towards us. We see *Star Princess*, a 700 foot cruiseship, in the thick of it, and stop in a small ice free clearing to watch. Very slowly the ship creeps through the ice towards us, but leaving what looks like a clean path behind them. We've heard the *Golden Princess*, the *Star's* sistership, may be coming in the Arm. Maybe we can follow them in? Let's find out.



(← *Star Princess in Tracy Arm.*)

Alex calls on the VHF radio "Star Princess, this is motor vessel Wild Blue on your port bow, channel 13". A voice with a distinct British accent comes back "Wild Blue, Star Princess good morning captain". "Star Princess, Wild Blue good morning. We're wondering if the Golden Princess might be entering the Arm today. If so when might that be?" "Yes sir.

She will be arriving in about two hours. Thankyou for calling. Also captain, we will shortly be moving directly into your area. Could you please clear the way for us?" "Star Princess, Wild Blue. Thankyou sir. We will move to the side for you. Have a nice day. Wild Blue out." Alex called Dick on Seagate and both boats moved over for the giant ship. Just as we cleared,



along comes the *Alaska Story*, an 80-foot charter boat, moving into the area cleared by the *Star Princess*. We decided to follow.

(← *Alaska Story*, a charter boat, leads Wild Blue and Seagate through the ice flow.)

Following a bigger boat seemed the thing to do, and it worked for awhile. Then the ice flow, which was too thick for the *Star Princess*, was also too thick for our “little” boats. We were able to get a photo of South Sawyer Glacier, the best we could do.

(← *South Sawyer Glacier*, a couple miles away.)

We didn't realize that as we passed through the flow, our return path quickly filled in with ice. We now had to turn the boat around, and find a new path out. Wasn't it Harriett that mentioned something about Shackelford?



(← *Alaska Story* is “all in” and now looks for a way out.)

It was not bad, it just took a bit of time. We thrust through a U-turn and luckily didn't scramble ice through the thrusters. Bob and Gerard manned boat hooks at the bow to fend off the large chunks, and we ever so slowly inched our way to ice free water.





*(← Gerard and Bob push ice away from the boat.)*

With a flash of brilliance, Seagate and crew held back when the ice flow thickened. They now lead Wild Blue and Alaska Story out of the ice.

The boats exited Tracy Arm on the ebb tide and fresh water flow for a 2-knot push.

We now headed for Taku Harbor, about 20 miles up Stephens Passage. We had a great time in the Arm but we're ready to get back to some fishing.

*(← Seagate leads the way to freedom.)*

We arrived at Taku in the afternoon and immediately set prawn and crab traps.

Taku has a newly completed public dock, and we enjoyed the comraderie of other Alaska cruisers. Tomorrow we'll do more prawning, crabbing and fishing, then leave for Juneau, just another 20 miles away. The barometer is falling so rain is likely again. It's amazing how much fun you can have in the rain. Cheers.

