

Orcas Island (& Colorado) – 2007

This is not a real trip report, since I only do those for foreign trips. So just consider it a rather long letter with limited distribution. Or consider it a time killer when sitting at an airport or two.

The “Old Lockheed Gang” selected Orcas Island, in the San Juans off of Seattle, for an outing this year. Participants were Caturas, Actons, Mendes, Caravahlos, Wolfsons, and Tim. Actons drove from Montana and arrived mid-day on Thursday, Caturas flew up a day early and also arrived Orcas mid-day on Thursday, and the other 5 of us flew from the Bay Area on Thursday AM. By prior arrangement we had reserved two rental cars from Enterprise, planning to meet there and distribute personnel. But the Mende plane (from Oakland) was late so we folks who came from San Jose (Caravalhos, Wolfsons, and Tim) grabbed our car and headed towards the Ferry. It is a couple hour trip and our time was tight, partially due to the rather long time it took to get the rental car at Enterprise, but we went for it. Arrived right at ferry departure time, 2:30 PM, but they were no longer letting people on (and perhaps were full) so made a u-turn and went back to Anacortes and (a) had a good and relaxing lunch and (b) did some grocery and liquor shopping. Mendes, of course, missed the ferry by quite a bit since they were at least a half hour behind us getting to Seattle, so we all ended up on the 5:35 PM ferry. Beautiful ride over in sunshine, and got to our cabins/cottages around 7:30 or so. Actons had brought special steaks with them and after we divvied up the 3 cottages appropriately, unpacked a bit, and had a few drinks, we had fine BBQ'd steaks for dinner, along with a salad, bread, and lots of wine and talk. Ate outdoors at a pair of pushed together picnic tables.

The cottages were at an old marina and small ferry landing site, thus right on the water. They faced the Sun when it came up in the AM to warm us up. All of these features were excellent. They were also rather old and in need of some fixing up, however, but overall a fine choice; especially when one factored in the enjoyable proprietor who was truly an old salt. The “straw drawing” for rooms ended up with our being in a two bedroom (small ones) cottage with the Actons.

After a heavy night of talking and drinking (the weather was warm enough for this to all take place out doors and the sky was so clear one could see the Milky Way) folks got up slowly the next day. Lounged around and then eventually did some exploring, both around our area and around other parts of the island. A major shopping trip was part of the exploring. That night we ate at a restaurant in the main village (East Sound) on Orcas. The restaurant had a great view of the sound but only so-so food and slow service.

Saturday began with the usual slow getting up. By now I also had the code to the island's wireless network so did some e-mail reading, primarily to keep somewhat up on the very busy times going on back at the lab since we had both of our major instruments under environmental testing. Bad timing for the trip but we'd made the trip reservation long ago, plus my priorities changed from work to play a few years ago. The major activity for Saturday was visiting the weekly Farmers Market as well a Flea Market. Neither was great and neither took as long as we expected so some of us headed off to the “far side”

of the island to the village of Deer Harbor, where we checked out a few things on the dock, had some ice cream, did a scenic stroll, picked wild blackberries, and things like that. Again the weather was absolutely beautiful. Dinner that night was Cioppino, prepared by Dick and Sharon; quite good, and again eaten out doors with lots of wine. Sunday's main activity was hiking up the primary mountain (Mt. Constitution) on the island. Speaking of hiking, we had also done a few mile walk around Cascade Lake on the prior day "to warm up" for this more strenuous effort. It was a relatively strenuous hike up the mountain on an absolutely beautiful day with fine forests and wonderful views in all directions wherein one could see snow capped mountains including the Canadian Coast Range, the Olympic Forest, Mount Baker, and even Mount Rainer in the distance when looking from the observation tower at the top of Mt. C. Seeing Mt. R qualified it as an especially clear day according to the literature there. Dawna and I had been up the mountain once before with the Borners in much more typical weather – fog and a bit of drizzle. Unfortunately she missed this beautiful outing since she was getting a cold and properly elected to stay at the cottage and take care of herself. That night, after our martinis, we had dinner at a nearby restaurant and it was good what with nice homey service. More stars and after dinner drinking and talking occurred.

The next day (Monday) was more of the same in terms of running around, seeing things, getting in some book reading time, being lazy, etc. That night I cooked fried chicken (with fine rice and gravy). Seems like that afternoon, prior to starting to work on the dinner, we drove to a state park a couple miles from our place and did a short and nice walk/hike there (Dawna handling this one). Tuesday was another beautiful day and 6 of us went kayaking in two person kayaks. We were out about 1.5 hours, circled an island, had a fine time. Dawna behaved and didn't go since getting a bit wet and cool would not have been a good idea for her. You may have noted that 6 of 11 went kayaking. Each of the outings would typically end up with about half the group participating and the others doing something else. I'm only mentioning the items D&I were involved in. Up until now we'd been doing alternating cooking and eating out night-by-night but folks decided to have the next two meals at our place with different persons taking the lead.

Tuesday we woke up to fog, more typical than the Sun we'd been having. But it cleared before noon. The same pattern was true for Wednesday. On this, now our last, day 6 of us went for a hike at a newly acquired Nature Preserve. Dawna gave it a shot and did very well by the way.

Thursday was checkout day with the departure ferry to leave at something like noon. Unfortunately it was about a half hour late, plus the travel time was longer than usual (perhaps due to areas of fog). This meant getting to the Seattle airport in time for flights was nip and tuck, and we raced as fast as we dared (or could). Heavy traffic in the Seattle area really made it unlikely we'd make the plane but a fast checkin with Enterprise gave us an outside shot. Raced through the airport, talked someone into taking our one checked bag even though it was past time they officially will do so, and made it onto the packed plane just in time. Had two middle seats as they had already given up our pre-booked seats but at last we were on the plane. We, by the way, were not headed home but rather to Denver, for a one day meeting on Friday. Arrived Denver, got the rental car, drove to

Boulder, checked in, and had a big hamburger at an Outback restaurant across the street from our motel. Got to bed late, but we had made it. On Friday, I did my meeting and Dawna did some bumming. That night we ate at the oldest Microbrewery in Colorado (Boulder Beer) and the beer was OK (Dawna's good and mine nothing special) and the food (fish and chips) was absolutely terrible.

Saturday we took a scenic/long route to Estes Park beginning with a fine drive up beautiful Boulder Canyon. As we continued there were many >12,000 ft mountains all around us. Got to Estes, found a place to sleep, and then headed off into the park for a splendid hike. Both of our lungs/systems did perfectly acceptable (I didn't say great) with this hiking at 8,200 feet or so; albeit we didn't go a long way, there wasn't a lot of elevation change, and we took our time. That night we ate a roasted chicken we picked up at the grocery store while sitting in our room looking at splendid mountains. Sunday we took the old road over the pass, you drive 15 MPH and it is one-way but with plenty of pull off spots to stop and see beautiful "stuff." At the top there is a Visitors Center which we visited and did a short walk to a peak. We were now at >12,000 feet, and that short trail is rather steep so one takes it quite slowly (oh, yes, it was darn windy and a bit cold as well). Then returned on the main Trail Ridge Road, with more stops to see things, including clouding up and rain in various directions (and a bit of hail during our drive). Got back lower and went to an area of the park where the Aspen were nice and yellow and did a few mile hike. Then it was off to the airport with the part of the drive from Estes Park to Boulder really quite nice. Arrived with comfortable time, went through quite lengthy security, had a Mexican meal, and flew home. This time we had our window and isle seats, albeit with a person between us. Arrived a bit later than scheduled, Nathan picked us up, and soon we were back in Cupertino.