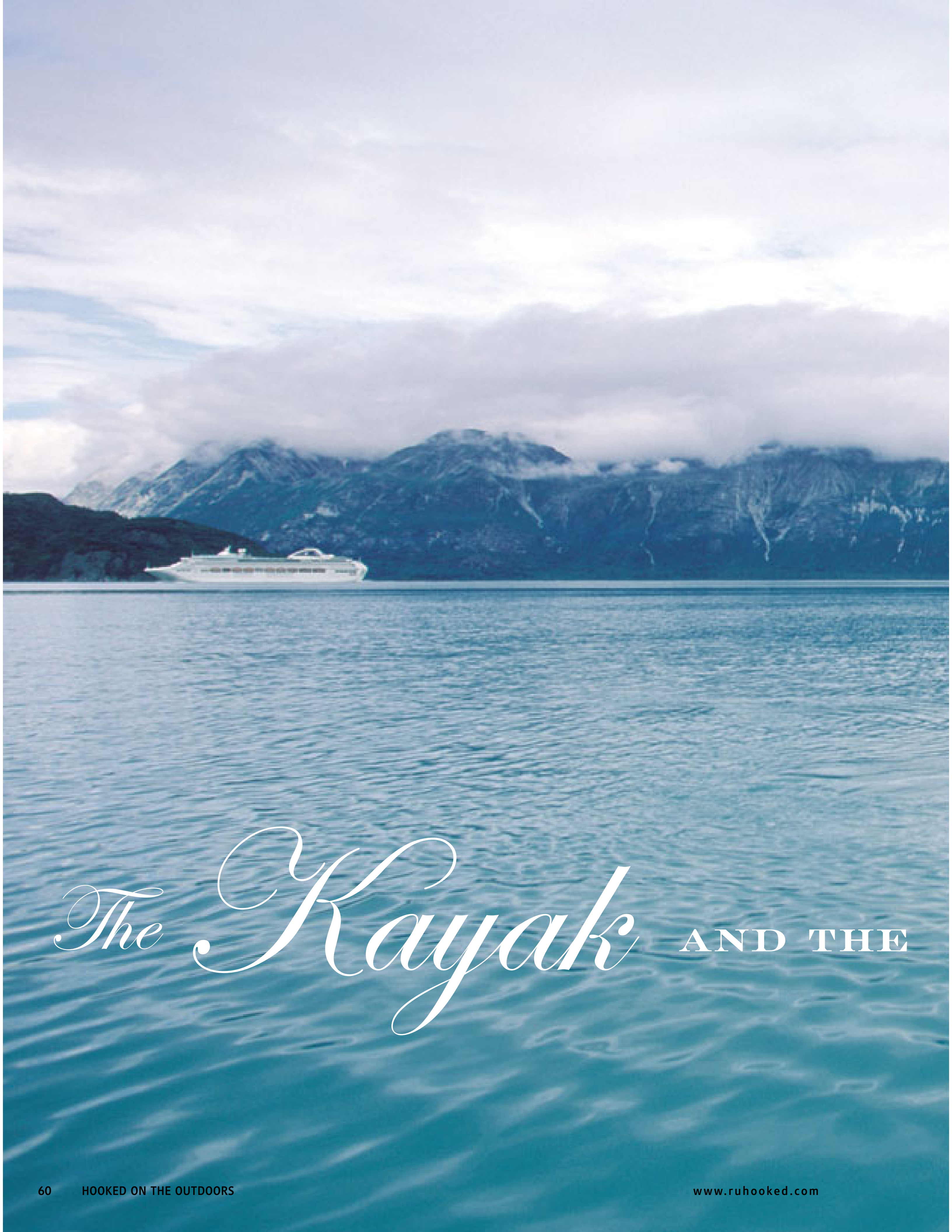


The Kayak AND THE

Cruise Ship

IS MOTOR-BOAT TOURISM DESTROYING ALASKA'S GLACIER BAY NATIONAL PARK? A VETERAN ALASKAN ADVENTURER FOLLOWED THE TRAIL OF THE BAY'S LEGENDARY DISCOVERER JOHN MUIR TO FIND OUT.

BY **JONATHAN WATERMAN**

After just a dozen miles of paddling into America's most storied park, our wilderness idyll suddenly turned sour. As I shut my eyes to better hear yodeling loons and gasping whales, a foghorn blasted across the waters. I blinked to behold a 100-foot-high cruise ship. Its swift and disconnected rumble past virgin stands of hemlock and glassine seas yanked me out of the primeval and back into the 21st century I had hoped to escape.

Through my binoculars, I read the insignia: "Princess Tours." This buoyant city block lolled, its ant-sized passengers motionless at the railings looking like—as the diehard paddlers say in these parts—*almost deads, newlyweds and overfeds*. Strange laughter, the clinking of china and discombobulated music reverberated off the still waters. Then the white leviathan faded into its own cloud of smoke. Unlike a whale spout, the smog remained, a black smudge against the skyline. As the wake hit us, my paddling partner Will and I were forced to turn east and paddle into two-foot-high waves to avoid capsizing.

"Damned cruise ship," Will said.

We had come to Glacier Bay National Park for a weeklong paddle partly because of the praise of our favorite 19th century conservationist, the man who wrote, "The Master Builder chose for a tool, not the thunder and lightning to rend and split asunder, not the stormy torrent nor the eroding rain, but the tender snowflake, noiselessly falling through unnumbered generations."

Naturally, times have changed since John Muir's day. But we had also come to see the North before the travel tourism business—indirectly created by Muir through his writings and prospering because of terrorism jitters—further overcrowded or damaged Alaska. Will, an adept athlete and jack of all trades, had paddled a sea kayak twice. I was no stranger to kayaks or Alaska, but I didn't know Glacier Bay. With Will's skepticism balancing my blithe optimism, we saw ourselves as an ideal modern-day team. Yet in our slap-dash naiveté and unfamiliarity with these waters, we may have appeared more Laurel and Hardy.

After twice grounding out in nonexistent passages between islands, we paddled into a 70-mile deep and double-armed waterway. That afternoon the tide dropped, temporarily trapping us between the mud bars and spitting clams of two islets. We lugged our kayaks 50 yards north and started boiling water for pasta. A few steps away, in the shadowed forest, the under-canopy bristled with over-size ferns and thick green moss and raptor whistles and the bouquet of life and death amid the bustling rot and burst of the regenerative nitrogen cycle.

Then a mysterious booming echoed across the waters. Muir first described as many as 69 glacier collapses per hour into the sea, like "a perpetual thunderstorm easily heard three or four miles away." Yet according to our maps, we were still 50 miles from the nearest glacier. We didn't know what we were hearing.

On the high beach with the best exposure to mountains and sea, we set up our tent. During our morning's check-in at park headquarters, the ranger pointed out that the cruise ship companies had complained about seeing bright-colored tents pitched along the shores of Glacier Bay's supposedly unspoiled shores. Hence the new park regulation: Backcountry users must hide their tents from passing boats. But, after traveling all the way to Alaska, we weren't going to hide in the forest.

Every summer, several hundred-thousand tourists penetrate the wildest reaches of this park in large motor boats, versus less than 2,000 kayakers and overnight campers. The *Anchorage Daily News* reported that the cruise ship industry had recently given the Alaskan Republican party $75,000 to try loosening cruise ship regulations in Glacier Bay National Park. Those of us who choose to physically "earn" the quiet sanctity of wilderness—by letting, as John Muir wrote, "nature's peace flow into us as sunshine into trees"—are supposed to abide the noisy wake of motor vehicles. By traveling in kayaks, Will and I felt demoted to second-class citizenship, at least in the eyes of park service administrators.

I gave my partner an earful about how this recent phenomenon of "access for all" has subjugated many of our greatest national treasures—Yellowstone, Arches, even ▶

Denali—into motorized theme parks for airplanes, snow machines and automobiles. "A large segment of our population believes," I said, while staking our tent into the most prime looking real estate, "that it's a constitutional privilege to view the natural world from behind the safety of heated glass, as if traveling to an aquarium."

The ranger had also asked if we were carrying a compass, and, although we shook our heads "no," he didn't ask if were carrying maps or a GPS. He inquired about the color of our boats and how much food we were carrying, then issued us the bear barrels to protect our food—and, ultimately, to protect the bears from learning bad behavior. Although the ranger had been courteous, his stiffness gave him away. Our Glacier Bay ranger had pressed his uniform and obtained a law enforcement degree, but his lack of familiarity with the maps showed that he'd spent more time goosing the throttle of a Lund skiff than feathering the paddle of a sea kayak.

AS ANOTHER CRUISE SHIP PASSED, WE FLASHED MOONS BACK AT THE SUN-GLINT OF HUNDREDS OF BINOCULARS AIMED TOWARD OUR BRIGHTLY COLORED TENT.

Will and I politely thanked him for the canned information and filled up our water jugs. Before shoving off, a local friend pressed a bound folder from The Ocean Conservancy in my hands and opened this 64-page "Cruise Control" report to a pertinent section:

"The National Parks Conservation Association [NPCA] listed Glacier Bay as one of the 10 most endangered national parks in the United States, primarily because of cruise ship air emissions, the killing of a pregnant humpback whale by a cruise ship in 2001 and legislation sponsored by Alaskan Senator Ted Stevens requiring the National Park Service to allow an increase in cruise ship traffic in the park."

In 1996, the National Park Service had allowed an increase in Glacier Bay cruise ships, so the NPCA took the government to court and, surprisingly, won. In August 2001, a federal judge ordered that the number of cruise ships entering the park each year would be reduced from 139 to 107, the pre-1996 level. For the park service, this meant losing nearly a half-million dollars in concessionaire fees. For sea kayakers, this meant that we would only see two cruise ships per day, each emitting several thousand automobiles worth of pollutants into the air.

Once we were able to escape park headquarters, we could concentrate on resuming the journey. Our week-long paddle back into time would follow the 4,000-year-old Little Ice Age, and its retreat 250 years ago, past the forests and new alder thickets and tree stumps—petrified beneath the cold centuries of glacial weight—and polished granite mountainsides. Then onto the shrinking glaciers of the park's creation.

That night the light—bombarding off the Bay and a sea of reflective icefields—clung to the horizon like a paystreak of gold brightening a streambed. We read from a copy of John Muir's posthumous book, *Travels in Alaska*. America's most celebrated mountaineering writer was 41 when he first came to Glacier Bay in 1879 and took credit for its discovery—even though Vancouver originally charted this coastline in 1794.

Nearly a hundred years later, Muir observed that Vancouver's ice cliffs had receded 50 miles up into a newly made bay. His part scientific and largely promotional descriptions of the icebound paradise—he claimed this Alaskan glacial landscape contained more ice than all of Switzerland—were presented in a series of public lectures and illustrated articles. Unlike Europeans who lived in cities surrounded by glaciated Alps, 19th-century Americans were removed from their remote mountains and had never seen ice flowing like rivers. In a decade's time, the mountaineer-cum prose stylist brought Glacier Bay into the garden rooms of thousands of wilderness-loving Americans, and in so doing, planted the seeds for a new national park. Unwittingly, Muir also created a tsunami of tourism.

By 1890, scores of steamships hauled tourists here for two-week cruises (the first modern cruise ships carrying thousands of passengers each started in 1953, as an adjunct to warmer Caribbean destinations). The highlight of the tours up Alaska's famed Inside Passage were in these whale-spouted waters that Will and I were now paddling, where ordinary Americans could come face to face with ice exploding into the ocean while crewmen hacked apart the smaller bergs and served their excursionists chilled cocktails.

In 1925, Glacier Bay National Monument was created by President Coolidge. Fourteen years later, Roosevelt doubled its acreage, and for 40 years, it remained the largest national park in the country. But as the park grew, so did strain from increasing tourists. Visitation jumped from 58,280 people in 1976, to 96,151 in 1980—when Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve expanded to 3.3 million acres. By the 1990s, a quarter of a million people, mostly cruise ship tourists, visited the park each summer, begging the question: Could one still experience the same splendor that Muir had described when a steamship dropped him off here in 1890?

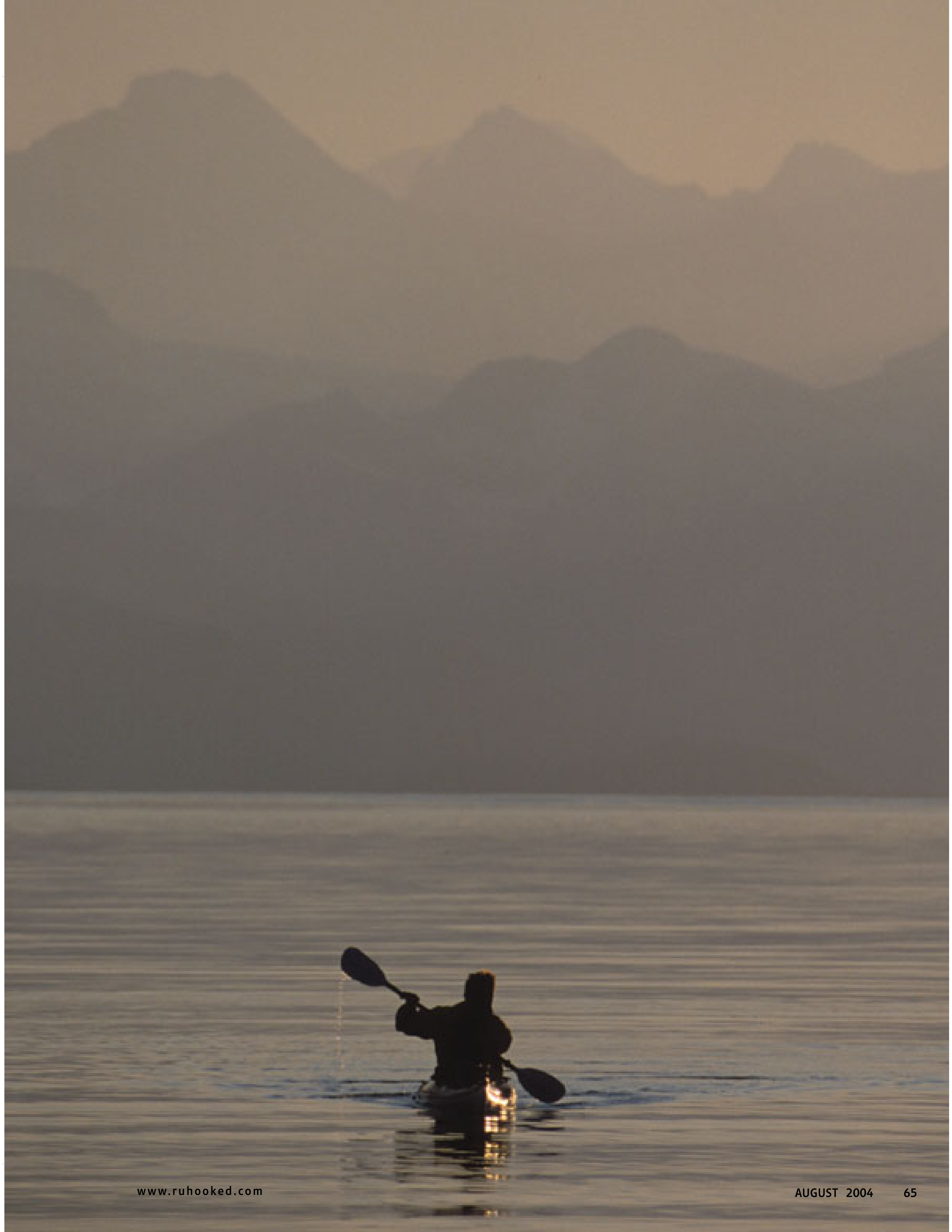
At dawn, repeated booming woke both Will and me. Now we had no doubt of the source: Forty-foot-long humpback whales—not seen in these waters by Muir—were breaching into the air, then slamming their 30 tons of blubber and baleen back down into the sea. For hours, from our illegal campsite next to the sea, we watched.

They *spy hopped*, poking their heads above water. They *lob tailed*, splashing the sea with their tails. And they *pec waved*, wagging their 16-foot-long pectoral fins like a greeting: Their audience on shore waved back.

Each performance closed with an arcing curve of their backs, a long "*poofff*" of watery vapor shot out of their blowholes, and with their dorsal fins pushed out, the whales dove back into their cafeteria. Down there—clouded by billowing plankton, vast schools of wriggling fish and slimy tentacles of emerald algae and bubbled seaweed—they sounded hundreds of feet.

All day long, with the nearest kayakers dozens of miles away, we put down our paddles to watch this endangered species surface and blow, jump and lunge, wave and sound. The afternoon temperatures climbed into the 80s, so we stayed off shore to keep cool. As two agnostics reveling in the infinity of nature, we felt more interactively involved than in any zoo, aquarium or church.

We chose the most conspicuous tent site and dove into the cold sea screaming lung-bursting oaths. As another cruise ship passed, we flashed moons back at the sun-glint of hundreds of ▶



binoculars aimed toward our brightly colored tent. We would learn over the coming days, as motor boats and cruise ships passed and rocked the waters, to pull our kayaks to high ground or throw down our paddles in a supportive brace. Mostly, we focused away from intrusions by marveling at clear streams rife with salmon, the pattern of diamonds sparkling on the water and sand shores dented with brown bear and wolf prints.

On the fourth day, alongside an 11-story Princess Tours cruise ship, the scenery suddenly improved as we paddled around a corner to greet Mount Fairweather, rising 15,300 above the sea, amid a convoluted layer cake of vanilla-chiffoned peaks. One-hundred and twenty-four years ago, my favorite mountaineering writer paddled a Tlingit dugout canoe in this West Arm of Glacier Bay. Muir described "the ineffably chaste and spiritual heights of the Fairweather Range, which were now hidden, now partly revealed, the whole making a picture of icy wildness unspeakably pure and sublime."

Muir's writings often stressed the gain to be found by sleeping on the ground, the enjoyment of munching a single cracker after tramping a dozen miles, and how we should "climb the mountains and get their good tidings." Yet this God-fearing, white-bearded pilgrim was not a doe-eyed transcendentalist, blind to human nature. As early as 1890, from his camp near the glacier that would soon bear his name, he wrote about the arrival of the steamship *Queen* "with two hundred and thirty tourists. What a show they made with their ribbons and Kodaks. All seemed happy and enthusiastic, though it was curious to see how promptly all of them ceased gazing when the dinner bell rang, and how many turned from the great thundering crystal world of ice." I couldn't help speculating that if Muir were alive today, he'd feel angered about cruise ships black-clouding and fog-horning alongside the amazing glaciers of the West Arm.

That afternoon we were glad of the fog, which hid the boat traffic, as we fought two miles across the wind-corduroyed West Arm and into calm, protected waters. Skidmore Bay is closed to motorized travel, along with five of 13 inlets—restricting travel within one-tenth of Glacier Bay's 327,000 marine acres. We rode the flood tide north. Riffles swung our bows back and forth as we tapped our rudder pedals and aimed into the smooth tongue of ocean mimicking river.

We fell back into bliss, and the landscape unfolded before us with more lucidity than any natural history museum. Clam shells spiked grizzly dung. Goshawks guarded a boulder field. And all sign or sound of humankind faded from memory—until another ship sounded a dominating blast from over the horizon.

"Damned cruise ship!"

Our focus returned to the route finding. This mission was complicated by the fog and the necessity of finding our escape creek out of the three-mile bay before the tide changed, drying up the creek until next month's spring moon flooded it again. If we missed this lone exit, we'd have to retrace our route south and back into the main bay. At first, we couldn't see the creek through the fog. We scanned the shore with our binoculars. Then, just as the tide switched, we aimed into a subtle current flashing against the still bay and showing the high tide rushing out of the creek. The narrow passageway would only fit one kayak at a time. We power-stroked in, fought the current for a hundred yards, then caught the back flow of tide, which carried us another half-mile out into the main bay, just as the creek ran dry. We whooped with joy.

"Try finding that kind of mastery aboard a cruise ship," I said.

"C'mon," Will asked, in a reversal of roles, "you mean to tell me you wouldn't accept a cruise under any circumstances?"

"Not for all the ice in Glacier Bay," I replied, "would I leave my family to go on a magazine assignment and get fat aboard one of those love boats."

A month later, my family and I joined a press tour on Holland America's 13-story, 780-foot-long *ms Volendam*, steaming from Vancouver to Glacier Bay. Historically speaking, it seemed serendipitous that Holland America Tours had been founded in Fairbanks a half century before. Their cruise ships started coming to Glacier Bay before most other companies, predisposing Holland America to look after the place (e.g., they burned a higher octane fuel to minimize air pollution), and to be grandfathered in as a park concessionaire.

The company also had a worldwide reputation for first-class service. Even a wilderness Visigoth couldn't help but admire the floral theme—on the carpets and etched on enormous vases with fresh flower arrangements. Walls were decked with red velvet, a half dozen delicate Italian chandeliers hung from the 747-seat ballroom, and courteous Indonesian stewards stood at every corner. That night, for our first meal, the fresh fish and precisely steamed vegetables and sculpted cakes mimicked the textured horizons of the Fairweather Range.

Initially, I had trouble understanding that I couldn't come into the stern ballroom during formal dinners wearing running shoes and blue jeans with a sport coat. But like shrugging into my Gore-Tex dry-top each day for the kayak, I quickly learned to make sacrifices to survive the *Volendam*. Nor could I forget that the company had made special dispensation by allowing me to bring Will's cousin, June (my wife), our 10-month-old son Nicholas and my mother-in-law, Carol. Although not *nearly dead, newly wed or overfed*, accompanying one another in sea kayaks would have left us barely fed, no longer wed and quite possibly *dead*.

My spiritual guide, Muir, had not refrained from trading the hardships of paddling a dugout canoe for being feted aboard steamships. Some of the most entertaining prose from his *Travels in Alaska* were observations of fellow passengers "strangely ignorant on the subject of earth sculpture and landscape-making."

Muir asked one elderly Scandinavian if he knew what a glacier was. "A big mountain all covered up with ice," he replied.

"Then a river," said Muir, "must be a big mountain all covered with water." Muir told him he "must reform, for a man who neither believed in God nor glaciers must be very bad, indeed the worst of all unbelievers."

Like Muir, I had also returned to see how my Glacier Bay experience would differ with more than a thousand passengers, aboard a comfortable and dry ship. After all, the trip with Will had ended in cold rain. Still, every minute that Will and I didn't love would be cherished through a gift unique to all adventurers: faulty memory. The Alaskan wilderness had put a forgettable ache in our paddling shoulders, showing us all the unpredictability, largesse and wildlife for which it's famous.

Despite the park service's generous loan of bear barrels, Will and I had been made to feel like chopped liver compared to the paying boat passengers. Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve is clearly catering to tourists who prefer warm beds over ground pads, staterooms over tents, interpretation over discovery and ▶

safe protection from the adverse elements of Alaska. Since I couldn't beat the cruise ships, maybe I would learn something by joining them.

Each time the *Volendam* docked with other cruise ships in Ketchikan, Juneau or Skagway, a crush of passengers—blue haired and flaxen, thin and overweight, riding baby carriages or wheelchairs—bowed the gangplanks. These credit card-carrying passengers were not all *almost dead, or newly wed* because the cruise ship companies had effectively extended their

> "BUT I OWN THIS GOAL:" JEROEN SAID, "TO GET PEOPLE OUT OF THEIR STATEROOMS AND STANDING ON DECK WHEN WE ARRIVE IN GLACIER BAY NEXT TO THE ICE."

nets to include every conceivable age, race and social class.

Southeast Alaska has been transformed by the cruise ship economy. An industry of seasonal "Alaskana" T-shirt and tourist shops have enlarged each port into a shopping mall, replete with espresso stands and ice cream stalls, borrowed fresh from the touristy heartland of Middle America, with the bric-a-brac bizarrely plopped alongside some of our greatest wilderness.

Yet none of this is new. As Muir reported about one Alaskan port in 1890, "The shops were jammed and mobbed, high prices paid of shabby stuff manufactured expressly for tourist trade. Silver bracelets hammered out of dollars and half dollars by Indian smiths are the most popular articles, then baskets, yellow cedar toy canoes, paddles, etc."

I had visited these towns repeatedly over the last three decades. In 1995, while single-handing a 30-foot sailboat—capable of running 6 knots in a gale—I had explored the Inside Passage. The difference, cruising at 19.7 knots on the *Volendam* was in losing all sense of challenge or sensory input: the molar-rattling bounce of incoming tide against wind, the rage of whirlpools, or the head-tingling adaptation known as *getting your sea legs* (seasickness is miraculously negated by the cruise ship's port and starboard thrusters).

On the roofed, third-level walkway, beneath a "Please no jogging" sign, as several dozen other passengers and I half heartedly attempted to work off the cordon bleu before yet another five-course meal, Alaska looked as distant as a promotional video, rolling innocuously and harmlessly unfelt over the rail.

At each port, Carol, June, Nicholas and I were escorted by capable guides on whale-watching boats, raft rides, hikes and glacial tours. As our guides led the way, fed us (again) or paddled the rafts, we never got wet, broke a sweat, shivered or felt the connection that Will and I had earned. Still, I could plainly observe my fellow passengers engaged in the adventures of their lives. Seeing orcas and humpback whales north of Juneau made everyone's eyes mist up, just as Muir complained in those same waters about his fellow steamship passengers being more interested in the "small whales" than in the larger geology.

Muir was also one of the first to write about the wilderness spirituality of Alaska. Indeed, his writing about the joys of physical hardship had half convinced me that steamships, let alone cruise ships, were not what he had in mind as the ideal viewing point for glaciers.

Or so I thought until I met the Dutch captain of the *Volendam*. At the initial press briefing, I couldn't help interrogating Jeroen Van Doselaar. Yet the more I pressed him, the more sympathetic he became to my environmental concerns. He explained that Holland America contributed generously to the

Alaska Raptor Rehabilitation Center, the Alaska SeaLife Center, the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle, the Yukon Wildlife Preserve, the American Oceans Campaign and the Seattle Aquarium. And he didn't have to tell me that if these 1,400 passengers spent their time camping out in Glacier Bay, the impacts (feces, denuded vegetation and over-fed grizzlies) would cause irreparable damage to America's greatest marine park.

Unlike most cruise ships, he said, "the *Volendam*, at a cost of $2.5 million, installed a wastewater treatment plant to purify sewage, sink and shower water to near-drinking water quality—cleaner than the treated wastewater of most Alaskan towns. We then discharge *dis* water," he said, burring his "th"s into "d"'s like all Dutchmen, "*wid* a slight saline content, back into *de* open ocean."

Sewage was disposed of at port facilities. Cans and bottles were recycled. And I had already noticed the deliberate lack of plastic—which can cause irreparable damage to sea creatures when accidentally disposed of overboard.

Jeroen was 35, shy and strangely fit for a cruise ship captain. As I spent more time in his company, he spoke graciously and maintained eye contact with subalterns and passengers alike. He also had a fondness for whales. "It would be impossible," he said softly over dinner that night, "for a *healthy* whale, with functional sonar, to get hit by a cruise ship."

Over a glass of merlot, I asked him about how he perceived his mission as captain of this seven-day cruise. He made it clear, with a conspiratorial whisper, that he didn't understand the mindset of many of his grape-shaped passengers. "But I own this goal:" Jeroen said, "to get people out of their staterooms and standing on deck when we arrive in Glacier Bay next to the ice. *Der* excitement about *de* power of nature *dere* makes everything worthwhile for me."

The next morning, day five, 1,130 miles out from Vancouver (the same time it took Will and I to paddle 50 miles from park headquarters to the ice), I stood on the bridge with the Captain as we reached Glacier Bay's Lamplaugh Glacier. Through my binoculars, two kayakers appeared microbial amid the ice cliffs and the vastness of the seascape.

I now had a completely different perspective of these glaciers. I was no longer worrying about collapsing ice cliffs, rolling bergs, upsetting wakes or my comfort level. On a cruise ship, a passenger could absorb the scenery without distraction, while being served on the foredeck two levels below with what appeared (through my binoculars) to be split-pea soup.

I refocused on the glacier. Patterns of light appeared on the glacial wall like a shimmering drive-in movie screen lit by an ultraviolet projector. A hundred yards west and halfway up the ice face, a prodigious and omniscient-looking blue eye—clutching a black boulder as its pupil—hinted of an animate force.

About his 1890 experience in a crowded steamship, John Muir similarly concluded, "All the tourists are delighted at seeing a grand glacier in the *flesh*"—recalling that era's artistic renderings of glaciers as alligators, snakes or sleeping giants.

I felt no less awestruck as we pulled around Jaw Point to worship the John Hopkins Glacier. If anything, the immensity of the mile-wide, 250-foot-high glacier made even the 110-foot-high, 105-foot-wide cruise ship seem as shrunken as the pants on my burgeoning gut. Torrents of chocolate colored, mostly digested rockwater rushed out from the bowels of the glaciers into the bay. I flinched when the Lamplaugh shifted behind us and several thousand tons of ice creaked, swayed and exploded into the sea with a resounding splash. Strangely enough, the resounding disorientation matched my perspective from the kayak.

Jeroen feathered the bow thruster lever as if it were a paddle, spinning the boat from starboard to port, avoiding the bigger bergs: a sapphire regatta berthing a third of the turquoise-tinted sea, mixed in with the suspended glacial till. "It used to be that cruise ships would blow their horns to try and collapse these ice walls, but this is a new era. Besides," he said, gesturing to the kayakers (now invisible to the naked eye, yet somehow he'd spotted them without using binoculars), "we have other people to think about here aside from those on board."

Captain Van Doselaar smiled like the boy holding his country above the waters with a thumb in the great dike. He nodded toward the aft window to show me why: The railings were lined with passengers. The casino and theaters and stores and tennis court and spa and exercise bikes and bingo hall (but not the cafeterias) had been abandoned. Passengers stood pointing and photographing and holding up their children. To commemorate this climactic arrival, the chefs proudly grilled silver salmon in the glass walled upper deck, alongside roosting guillemots, carved from ice. No one would miss the view as they ate.

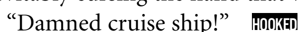
Over the ship's intercom, the naturalist—sold to Holland America by the park service for the day rate of $1 per passenger—sermonized in hushed tones over the intercom, as if we stood before the altar at some primordial church. She explained how tightly packed ice acts like a prism, transmitting the high-energy blue light, while loosely packed ice absorbs the high-energy light and appears white. Everyone listened intently. "Newly minted environmentalists" Jeroen called them. Fourteen hundred passengers, and many of the 700 crew, ogled what Muir called "a magnificent picture of nature's power and industry and love of beauty."

America's natural history prophet had fathered his first child, Wanda, by the time he made his third trip to Glacier Bay in 1890. Over the last six months, I too felt the distinctive mellowing ascribed to adventurers who become parents. Once you have a child, you get this urge to share the wilderness. I had never expected that riding this love boat with my son and wife and mother-in-law—let alone hundreds of other awe-struck passengers—would have been such an aesthetic experience. History doesn't tell us if Muir ever brought his daughters north on the steamships to see the ice, but his last book opens, "I care to live only to entice people to look at the Nature's loveliness." And, here in the heart of Glacier Bay, I now felt certain that he would have approved of this cruise ship's mission.

As Jeroen spun the boat back to starboard, hundreds ran, limped and wheeled their overfed bodies across the decks to warm their souls and stay close to the cerulean wall of ice—like an inverse rotisserie. I rushed out to find June and Nicholas.

We joined the crowd and dutifully took our place at the end of a long line, next to the retractable-roofed swimming pool, for a plate of salmon and baked Alaska. From mid queue, an impatient and glandularly challenged woman with a Bronx accent turned our eyes away from the glacial walls alongside the ship. I had learned that the cruise ships served an invaluable function of opening apathetic souls to the stirring singularity of Glacier Bay, even if a few only appreciated its ice in their drinks. So I couldn't help but laugh when the woman—tired of waiting in line—carped the now-familiar refrain, inevitably cursing the hand that would feed us:

"Damned cruise ship!"



Go There:

By Kayak

No fees are required in Glacier Bay National Park (907-697-2627; www.nps.gov/glba), but all campers must attend an orientation at the Visitor Information Station (907-697-2661) where they can obtain free, mandatory backcountry permits and bear-resistant food canisters. The park's concessionaire-operated tour boat (888-227-8687) will drop you off in the backcountry and pick you up. For a list of other visitors services in the park (including charter planes, kayak rentals, etc.) go to www.nps.gov/glba/InDepth/visit/services.htm.

By Cruise Ship

Holland America (877-SAIL-HAL [7245-425]; www.hollandamerica.com) runs 7-day roundtrip cruises to Glacier Bay from Vancouver and Seattle May through September. Trips start at $799 and there's a cash back refund for cancellations (for any reason!) up to 24 hours before departure.

Further Reading

In *Meditations of John Muir: Nature's Temple* ($12; Wilderness Press, 2001) the wilderness prophet's insights are presented alongside quotes from other celebrated authors and spiritual texts. *John Muir's Last Journey South to the Amazon and East to Africa* ($16; Island Press, 2001) chronicles a 73-year-old Muir's last great adventure from the Amazon rainforest to the headwaters of the Nile. Muir's writings are public domain so you can also download his complete works—including *Travels in Alaska*—from the Sierra Club's Web site (www.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/frameindex.html?) for free.