

Earl's Diary - Wednesday - May 5, 2013

Dear Loyal Readers;

This is the day we were going back to Yellowstone National Park to see what we could see. In my last report I mentioned we were staying at an RV park in Victor, Idaho. It was 102 miles back to Yellowstone where we were going to catch our tour bus.

Michele and I left Victor at 6:00am to make the bus in time at 9:15. (6:00am, Egads! That's early!!!!) Since this is my first visit to Yellowstone, I really wanted to see all the (hot) spots in the park.

We arrived in plenty of time and were eager to climb aboard with the twenty-six other site-seers. This was to be a nine or ten hour trip around the lower loop of the park. (The main park road is like a figure 8.) We were scheduled to see most of the really BIG attractions.

Our driver/guide was Lucas. He announced he was from Georgia. I noticed a distinct non-southern accent and asked about it. He said his family moved to Georgia when he was 12, hence, no southern accent. He was 28 years old and this was his third year at Yellowstone. He was very conversant and made a good guide. His college degree in geology helped in explaining some of the geological features of the park.



Our first stop was at Lake Lodge, one of the very earliest “luxury” lodges in the park. It has a beautiful view of Yellowstone Lake. Yellowstone Lake is the largest body of water in Yellowstone National Park. It is the largest high-elevation lake (above 7000 feet) in North America (7,732 feet above sea level) and covers 136 square miles with 141 miles of shoreline, and is more than 400 feet deep in some spots. The average depth is 140 feet.



On the way to our next stop we found a couple of bison drinking water near the road.

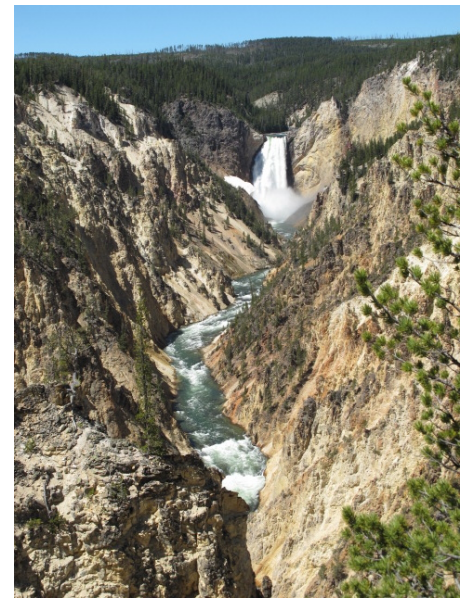
Our next stop was at Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. I must admit I was very surprised to find the falls so close to population centers. I always imagined it to be away from everything. NOT!! It is only about 1/2 mile from Canyon Village!



Yep! I was there!



Upper Falls - 109 feet



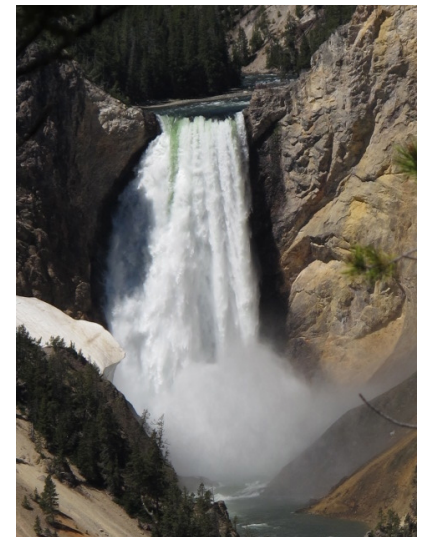
Lower Falls - 308 feet. I was surprised at the number of people here the first part of June. The overlooks were so crowded a person could hardly move. I can't imagine what it would be like in mid-summer! These have to be the most photographed falls in the world!



Sightseers brave the overlook of the upper falls.



Beautiful colors are displayed from the downside of the lower falls.



I was here also!



We stopped for a quick look at Gibbon falls.

We stopped at Canyon Village for a lunch break. Michele had prepared P and J sandwiches for us. I'm glad she did because the lines at the shops were very long! I felt like taking a nap but resisted. It felt so nice just sitting in the sun.

Famously hot features:

Hot Springs are the most common hydrothermal features in the park. They vary from frothing mocha-like boiling water to clear and calm pools of unfathomable depth.



Mudpots are acidic features with a limited water supply. Their consistency and activity vary with the seasons and precipitation.



Fumaroles or steam vents are the hottest hydro-thermal features in the park. They are easier to see in cool weather.



Geysers are hot springs with narrow spaces in their plumbing, usually near the surface. These constrictions prevent water from circulating freely to the surface where heat could escape. The deepest circulating water can exceed the surface boiling point (199 degreesF). As the water rises, steam forms. Bubbling upward, steam expands as it nears the top of the water column until the bubbles are too large to pass freely through the constrictions. At a critical point, the confined bubbles actually lift the water above, causing the geyser to splash or overflow.

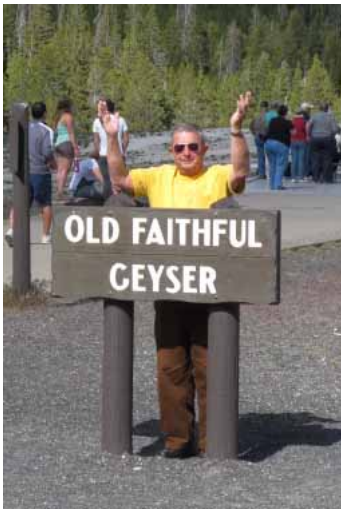


Among the first forms to evolve on earth were microbes whose descendants now live in extreme high-temperature, sometimes acidic, habitats like those in and around thermal features. The heat-loving microorganisms called thermophiles -- “thermo” for heat, “phile” for lover -- survive and thrive in Yellowstone’s active volcanic environment.

Nourished by energy and chemical building blocks available in the hot springs, the microbes construct vividly colored communities. Community shapes, colors, and locations vary depending on the types of microbes, the pH (acidity or alkalinity), and the temperature of the feature.



Roadside forests are mainly lodgepole pine. Several spots we were able to see thousands of young trees that naturally regenerated after the fires of 1988.



I was here too!

Old Faithful and the majority of the world's geysers are preserved here. They are the main reason the park was established on March 1, 1872 as America's first national park -- an idea that spread worldwide. A mountain wild land, home to grizzly bears, wolves, and herds of bison and elk, the park is the core of one of the last, nearly intact, natural ecosystems in the Earth's temperate zone.



At our stop for Old Faithful, the estimated time of the next eruption was 4:52. About 4:30 the hoards of people started to congregate at the site. We selected a good site back from those hoards and I think I got a better picture that way. Old Faithful was only off by about 5 minutes - 4:57. I wasn't sure how long the eruption would last. It actually lasted from 5 to 7 minutes, then it crept back into its hole. (To take a nap???? I could tell it was taking a nap because every once in awhile it snored a brief puff of steam!)

Kepler Cascades - waterfall from top of photo to bottom.

Alas, it was time to climb aboard our bus and head for the final overlook - Kepler Cascades.

We crossed the Continental Divide 3 times on our tour. Lake Isa is an interesting point. The lake straddles the Continental Divide at Craig Pass.

We arrived back at our starting point - Grant Village at 6:00, ahead of our 6:30 projected return time. We said goodbye to Lucas and he drove off in an empty bus. The tour actually started at Old Faithful but we got on with 6 other couples at Grant Village. That was our closest place to our RV park in Victor.

Isa Lake is believed to be the only natural lake in the world which drains to two different oceans *backwards*. The east side of the lake drains by way of the Lewis River to the Pacific Ocean and the west side of the lake drains by way of the Firehole River to the Atlantic Ocean. This is the opposite of what one would expect since the Atlantic Ocean is east of the lake and the Pacific Ocean is to the west.

We hopped into my truck and spent the next 2 1/2 hours driving "home". We made a grocery stop in Jackson and arrived at the park at 9:30pm, just in time to hop into bed.

Tomorrow we will be exploring Grand Teton National Park. So until then, thanks for coming along with me on this trip. Bye for now - - Earl

