

The Klondike Gold Rush of 2007

11 February 2008

[Trailhead!] In July, members of Venturing Crew 360 and Boy Scout Troop 316 traveled to Skagway, Alaska to follow the Klondike Goldrush Trail of 1898. They climbed the Golden Stairs to the summit of Chilkoot Pass on their way from the ghost town of Dyea, AK to the ghost town of Lake Bennett, BC. During the winter of 1898 these were two of the largest cities on the west coast of North America. Today, Dyea is nothing but a tidal flat and Lake Bennett is a Parks Canada Campground and railroad station for the White Pass and Yukon Railroad (more on this later).

[Crew 360s bus] The trip began just north of Seattle in late July. Scouts and Venturers loaded up in a converted greyhound bus and started the 1800 mile drive up the West Access Highway to Dawson Creek, BC and then west on the Alaska Highway to Carcross, near Whitehorse, Yukon. Carcross is a First Nation Village at the east end of Lake Bennett and marks the beginning of the Yukon River section of the Klondike Goldrush Trail. It is about 500 miles by canoe or row boat from Carcross to Dawson City, Yukon, where gold was discovered on Rabbit Creek in 1896.

[Photo op at Dawson Creek] About one hundred miles from home, we crossed uneventfully into Canada headed northeast on Highway 1 to Hope, BC. From Hope (where the movie Rambo-First Blood was filmed) we turned north, heading into the Cariboo Gold Rush Country of the BC interior. We stopped at Hell's Gate on the Fraser River and rode the Airtram down to a place where one of the largest rivers in North America squeezes through a sheer walled canyon only about 100 feet wide. This was a great rest stop after riding 300 miles. We continued north, finding each interior city smaller than the last until we got to Prince George, the last large city we would see until our return home. We stopped for fast food in Prince George and had our last Big Macs for at least a week. From Prince George, we headed north to Dawson Creek where the Alaska Highway begins and where a marker for Milepost Zero sits in the middle of the town's main intersection. Dawson Creek is a farming town situated right on the British Columbia and Alberta provincial border. It is surrounded by tall grain silos and fields of bright yellow canola. Naturally, we stopped and took the obligatory group photo.

