Toms Skagway Alaska Port Guide Part 2 of 3

White Pass Train

Part 1 of the Skagway Guide covers a walking tour to all major attractions in, and near, Skagway City.
Part 2 of the Skagway Guide covers a White Pass train to Fraser, a bus tour to Emerald Lake, Caribou Crossing Trading Post, Carcross Native Village, and information on car rental touring from Skagway.
Part 3 of the Skagway Guide covers a boat ride from Skagway dock to Haines, a bus ride through the country, and a jet boat tour of Chilcat River.

**The White Pass Train** to Fraser, Canada is the most popular tour. You can ride the train one-way or round trip. **Bus tours** are often combined with the White Pass Train between Skagway and Fraser, Canada. A bus tour provides an additional, different experience than the train ride. The bus stops for photos and visits sites that provide a memorable introduction to the Yukon Territory.

- Board the bus at the Fraser train station for a 6-hour tour that begins at the beautiful Yukon territory Emerald Lake area with several photo stops.
- Stop at Caribou Crossing Trading Post. Have lunch, then watch Iditarod dogs race, or for a modest fee, ride in a cart, visit the kennels, and pet the puppies. The shops have artwork, crafts products, and souvenirs. The wild life museum is OUTSTANDING!!! It has beautiful, world class taxidermy displays of wild animals of Alaska past and present including a Wooly Mammoth. See [http://www.cariboucrossing.ca/](http://www.cariboucrossing.ca/)  See [http://www.cariboucrossing.ca/index.html](http://www.cariboucrossing.ca/index.html)
- Stop at Carcross Native Village Trading Post with native art masks, stone carvings, leather goods, paintings, colorful totem poles, a restaurant, ice cream shop, a bakery, beer, coffee, etc.
- The drive back to Skagway is on Klondike Highway parallel to the White Pass Train route. From the bus, you’ll see spectacular views of the lakes and snow covered mountains. Also, our bus stopped so we could take photos of a large black bear with two cubs next to the highway.

**Car rental touring** can be a uniquely wonderful experience. Rent a car near the cruise ship dock and drive the same route as the bus tour between Skagway and Emerald Lake in the Yukon. The major advantage of car rental is that you have complete freedom to stop anywhere and spend time as you choose. You can stop at the same sites as the bus tour and at the world famous Carcross Desert where the tour buses don’t stop. And you can use the car for a driving tour of Skagway to visit sites 2 miles north of the city, e.g. Gold Rush Cemetery and Lower Reid Falls. Also, car rental is inexpensive if you have four or more people to share the cost.

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**CAVEAT**

Information contained herein is believed to be accurate. **PLEASE verify the information you use for your travel plans. Opinions expressed are my own. This port guide is protected by copyright law - see the last page of this guide for legal notices.**

**Tom Sheridan**

I would like to thank Linda Safier for her help on this port guide.
White Pass Train Ride from Skagway to Fraser, British Columbia, Canada

The train ride is the most popular tourist attraction in Skagway. There are train tours to different locations in Canada and round trip trains from/to Skagway. We took a train to Fraser with a bus tour back to Skagway. Reserve and book your tour before your cruise ship arrives in Skagway. We booked through Princess Cruises. See this Video on the train ride https://wpyr.com/wp-content/themes/wpyr/videos/ktuu640.mp4

Where you board the train

Two popular sites to board the train are next to the ships at the Railroad Dock or 15th Ave and State Street. My Skagway PART 1 guide shows detailed maps for both of these locations. In our case, we boarded a bus next to our ship at Railroad Dock. The bus took us to 15th Avenue and State Street to board our train.

Time for a walking tour of Skagway city before or after your White Pass train ride?

As a general rule, cruise ships dock all day in Skagway. You should have time to tour Skagway before or after your train ride. Our morning train and bus tour was 8 hours long. Our ship was in port for 12 hours. When the bus returned to Skagway, I had time for walking tour of the city that’s described in my Skagway Part I guide.

Issues that affect your train tour

• **Weather:** On May 28th, 2017 the skies were clear, the temperature was comfortable, and there was a lot of snow and ice as the train passed the Whitepass Summit and proceeded into Fraser. We were lucky, conditions were “perfect” to take photos.

• **Where to take photos from the train:** The train travels with steep mountains on one side and valleys with mountains in the background on the other side. **When going North from Skagway to Fraser, the best views are on the LEFT (WEST) “valley side” of the train.** When traveling South from Faser to Skagway, the best views are on the RIGHT (WEST) “valley side” of the train.

There are some turns along the route. **When the train is turning at a curve to the left, the best place to take a photo is on the left side of the train to get the engine in the picture. Conversely, when the train is turning to the right, the best place to take a photo is from the right side of the train.**

**There are scenic areas all along the train route, keep your camera handy!**

• **Photos from inside or outside of the train:** The train cars have huge windows. To avoid reflections from the glass, I took all my photos standing outside the train on the platform at either the front of back of our train car.

There’s room for about four people to stand on the platform. The best views for photos looking forward or backward along the side of the train are from the outside edge of the platform. As a courtesy, we took turns and changed positions on the platform so other passengers could take photos from the platform.
Ideally you would know “what’s ahead” on your train route and the best places to take photos.

Passengers don’t know where the best photos are along the 96 minute train ride. Sometimes, there’s not much time to take the photo. It would be nice to know “what’s ahead” to plan for your photos.

To address this issue, I’ve created a map showing the train route from Skagway to Fraser and pointed out the most scenic areas to take photos.

- In addition to the main map, I created detailed maps of sections along the route to highlight the type of scenery in that area.
- I list the time the train will pass scenic areas relative to the time the train starts to travel from Skagway. For example, there are two train tunnels along the route. People like to take photos of the train entering a tunnel. The first tunnel is 47 minutes and the second tunnel is 59 minutes from the time the train starts travel from 15th Avenue near State St in Skagway. Your train might pass these points a few minutes before or after this time, but it’s a reasonable approximation of when to take photos. Using this guide and your watch, you should be able to estimate when the most scenic areas along the route will come into view so you can take postcard photos.
- I also list the GPS coordinates for all the photos in this guide. GPS is the ideal way to know “what’s ahead” so you can get ready to take photos along the train route. See my web-page [https://www.tomsportguides.com/world-gps-maps.html](https://www.tomsportguides.com/world-gps-maps.html) on FREE world GPS maps you can download for use with any GPS enabled device. The “ideal” GPS device is a 7 to 10” tablet or phone. With the maps and GPS coordinates loaded onto your device, you can watch the train travel, check it’s speed, and see where I took photos. You don’t need WIFI or cell phone service when the maps are on your device.

I have also published a map user guide on how to use GPS coordinates from my port guides to find locations on Google or Microsoft Bing. See [https://www.tomsportguides.com/map-user-guide.html](https://www.tomsportguides.com/map-user-guide.html)

In this guide, I provide GPS coordinates for important locations for use with Google maps and GPS enabled devices. The format I use is Degrees, Minutes, and Seconds ddd° mm' ss.ss” N ddd° mm' ss.ss” E.

Copy and paste GPS coordinates from this guide into Google or Microsoft Bing maps
Or type GPS coordinate numbers and periods into the map search box replacing the symbols for degrees, minutes, and seconds with spaces.

For example: the famous Dead Horse Gulch has GPS coordinates = 59°36'09.4"N 135°08'34.3"W

Copy & Paste 59°36'09.4"N 135°08'34.3"W from this guide into Google maps and press “enter key”
Or Type 59 36 09.4 n 135 08 34.3 w into Google or Bing Maps and press “enter key”. Google places a down-pointing red arrow and Bing maps places a circle at the GPS location for Dead Horse Gulch.

First Photo Opportunity on the Train Ride= Gold Rush Cemetery

Our tour bus drove us from our ship to 15th Avenue near State Street (A). We went to our assigned train car and took a seat. The first photo opportunity was when the train passed the Gold Rush Cemetery which is next to the tracks on the right hand side. It takes a minute or two for the train to travel 4150 feet to the Gold Rush Cemetery (B). Keep your camera ready.
B) Gold Rush Cemetery GPS = 59°28'13.9"N 135°17'32.3"W

Time from start of train ride = 1 minute

I did not realize the Gold Rush Cemetery was next to the train track on the right hand side of the train. I missed this photo opportunity. Since I didn’t take a photo, I’m not sure what you can see from the train.

The photo below is from the National Park Service NPS photo/Karl Gurcke

This tombstone marks the grave of Jefferson "Soapy" Smith, the con man, saloon owner, gang leader, and notorious outlaw who “ruled” Skagway until he was shot and killed by surveyor Frank Reid.

See https://www.nps.gov/klgo/learn/historyculture/cemeteries.htm

Google has 23 photos of the cemetery and shows the map location of the cemetery. Do a Google search for “Gold Rush Cemetery Alaska St, Skagway” to see excellent photos of the cemetery.

The map on the next page shows the driving route along Klondike Highway from Skagway to Frazer and the White Pass rail route that is parallel to the highway.

The letters along the train route A through Y are key points of interest where I took photos.

In this guide, I list the time I took each photo as the number of minutes on the train ride from the starting point at zero minutes. This information can help you estimate when your train will reach these locations.

In addition, I have a brief description for the photos and GPS coordinates for the exact location where the photo was taken. You can use these coordinates to find these locations on Google or Microsoft maps. And, if you are using a GPS enabled device while you are traveling on the train you will know when you are at the location where I took my photos.
Travel from 15th Ave & State St in Skagway, Alaska to Fraser, British Columbia, Canada:

Drive 21.4 miles and 44 minutes along Klondike Hwy.

Ride the train 27.7 miles and 96 minutes.

Points of interest and photos are shown as A through Y.

Board the train in Skagway near 15th Ave & State St.
The map below shows the first 12 minutes of the train ride.

In this section of the train route, there are multiple opportunities to take photos along the Skagway River. The train also makes some turns in this area. When the train turns, you have the possibility of taking a popular type of photo with the engine at the front of the curve pulling the train. Also, there will be trestle bridges supporting the train tracks across the river in the valley. See my photos below.

C) Skagway River  Travel time from start = 4 minutes
D) Travel time from start  = 9 minutes   GPS = 59°30'06.0"N 135°13'45.4"W

E) Note the trestle bridge in the lower left of the photo that allows the train to cross the river in the valley
   Travel time from start  = 9 minutes   GPS = 59°30'08.0"N 135°13'41.2"W
The photos below are in the mountains

F) Travel time from start = 12 minutes  GPS = 59°30′26.2″N 135°14′46.5″W

G) Note the trestle bridge  Travel time from start = 40 minutes  GPS = 59°33′09.4″N 135°07′18.0″W
H) Travel time from start = 40 minutes  GPS = 59°33'12.6"N 135°07'14.3"W

I) Travel time from start = 41 minutes  GPS = 59°33'22.5"N 135°07'36.9"W
J) Travel time from start = 45 minutes  GPS = 59°33'54.2"N 135°08'47.5"W

K) First tunnel  Travel time from start = 47 minutes  GPS = 59°34'10.9"N 135°08'59.5"W
The next section of the train route is one of the most historically important and most photographed sections of the White Pass train route to Fraser. This section of the track has the abandoned trestle over the deep ravine called Dead Horse Gulch.

This is the deep ravine where pack horses, heavily loaded with supplies fell off the mountain trails to their death. It was also used as a burial area for sick or dying horses. It is estimated that bones from more than 3000 dead horses are in the bottom of the gulch bleached by the sun.

Take photos of the abandoned train trestle. See my photos M and N of the trestle.

Immediately after the abandoned train trestle, the train turns to the left and passes over the new train trestle. See my photo O.

The train enters the second tunnel on this train route. See my photo P.

When the train exits the second tunnel, you’ll discover an entirely different, fascinating and beautiful landscape. We were there on May 28, 2017. There was a lot of snow and ice in the lakes that surround the train track with beautiful snow covered mountains in the background.

I believe this is the most beautiful section of the train route. Take lots of pictures. Many of them will be postcard quality.

Be sure to take a picture of the White Pass Summit with the flags of Canada and the US.

Although the train track north of the tunnel seems to be on level ground, it “takes forever” for the train to come to a stop at Fraser where you can disembark. I think the extra time is required because they are hooking up other engines to the train while it is moving so it will be set up for the next leg of the journey.
Microsoft has excellent aerial maps for this area. The map above shows the topography and detail near the tunnel. The tunnel begins at point **P**) which is my photo on the previous page.

Here are the photos that appear on this map taken from the left side of the train:

- **M**) Abandoned trestle bridge at “Dead Horse Gulch”
- **N**) Abandoned trestle bridge (close up)
- **O**) Train turning left and crossing new trestle bridge
- **P**) Train entering tunnel
M) Dead Horse Gulch - Abandoned trestle bridge  Travel time from start  = 56 minutes
GPS = 59°36'09.4"N 135°08'34.3"W

N) Dead Horse Gulch - Abandoned trestle bridge  Travel time from start  = 56 minutes
GPS = 59°36'11.7"N 135°08'31.6"W
O) Crossing new trestle  Travel time from start = 59 minutes  GPS = 59°36'18.1"N 135°08'20.7"W

P) Second tunnel  Travel time from start = 59 minutes  GPS = 59°36'23.0"N 135°08'22.2"W
Q) Exit from tunnel  Travel time from start = 61 minutes  GPS = 59°36'41.4"N 135°08'36.7"W
It’s like entering an entirely different, beautiful, new landscape when you exit the tunnel.

R) Travel time from start = 62 minutes  GPS = 59°36'55.9"N 135°08'27.1"W
S) White Pass Summit International Border:  Canadian and American Flags  
Travel time from start  = 63 minutes   
GPS = 59°37'23.0"N 135°08'19.3"W  

T) Travel time from start  = 64 minutes   
GPS = 59°37'32.7"N 135°08'17.0"W
V) Travel time from start = 67 minutes  GPS = $59^\circ 38'33.6"N$ $135^\circ 07'19.5"W$
This landscape is gorgeous!!!
X) Travel time from start = 75 minutes  GPS = 59°40'53.1"N 135°04'30.3"W

Y) Travel time from start = 96 minutes  GPS = 59°42'54.1"N 135°02'43.4"W

We disembarked the train and boarded our bus with our driver for our 6 hour bus tour.
Travel options to return to Skagway from Fraser Train Station

1) Take the White Pass Train back to Skagway?
Once you ride the train to see and photograph every important site along the route, there isn’t any advantage to riding the same train route again. We chose a bus tour from Fraser to Skagway for a different experience.

2) Which Bus Tour from Fraser to Skagway?
The Yukon is famous for spectacular scenery, wildlife, and history. We chose the Princess 8-hour excursion (SGY-180) that included 2-hours for the White Pass train from Skagway to Fraser and 6-hours for the bus excursion back to Skagway. The 8-hour excursion cost $220/person and was well worth it.

Bus stops with GPS coordinates from Fraser north to Emerald Lake, then south to Skagway.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GPS</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>GPS = 59°42'54.2&quot;N 135°02'43.8&quot;W</td>
<td>Board the bus next to the train in Fraser, BC, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>GPS = 60°00'02.2&quot;N 134°39'44.5&quot;W</td>
<td>Road Sign Entering Yukon Territory from British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>GPS = 60°16'07.0&quot;N 134°44'45.3&quot;W</td>
<td>Emerald Lake in the Southern Lakes area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>GPS = 60°11'42.1&quot;N 134°42'09.6&quot;W</td>
<td>Caribou Crossing Trading Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Next to Caribou Crossing Trading Post</td>
<td>Carcross Desert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>GPS = 60°09'56.1&quot;N 134°42'21.8&quot;W</td>
<td>Carcross Commons Native Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>GPS = 59°55'24.3&quot;N 134°46'39.3&quot;W</td>
<td>Stop to take photos of a Bear next to highway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>GPS = 59°39'16.2&quot;N 135°07'38.4&quot;W</td>
<td>Snow covered lakes and mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>GPS = 59°26'51.9&quot;N 135°19'15.5&quot;W</td>
<td>Arrive at the Railroad dock in Skagway, Alaska ~ 4 pm</td>
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Description of stops A) through H) on our 6-hour bus tour from Fraser to Skagway

A) We boarded our bus next to the train in Fraser. At the Canadian border, we had to hold our passport photo next to our face as the immigration agents walked through the bus.

B) Our first stop was at the Yukon Territory road sign. Normally, I hate bus tours because the bus doesn’t stop for photos. I liked this bus tour. Our driver was excellent. She pointed out important sites and frequently stopped so we could get out to see and photograph the landscape. On one stop, she pointed out mountain goats way up on the mountain. They were there, but hard to see because of the distance. **Consider carrying binoculars to view wildlife on your tour.**

C) We drove north and stopped at the world famous Emerald Lake for photos.

D) Then we turned around and headed south to Caribou Crossing Trading Post for a 90 minute stop. I was really impressed. There’s an incredible wildlife museum where I spent a lot of time taking pictures. Then I went outside to watch and photograph the husky dogs pulling carts. There was no snow, so the dogs pull carts with large tires. You can ride the dog carts for a fee. This is the perfect stop for dog lovers. You can visit the kennels (for a fee) and pet the husky puppies. Lunch was included in our tour price. We had BBQ chicken, salad, donuts, and drinks.

The world famous **Carcross Dessert** is next to Caribou Crossing Trading Post. Our bus drove past the desert twice but did not stop. I don’t understand why the tour buses don’t stop at the desert.

E) Our next stop was 45 minutes at Carcross Commons Native Village with native art, carvings, shops, souvenirs, totem poles, a restaurant, bar, etc.

F) Our driver spotted a black bear next to the road and stopped for photos from inside the bus.

G) We passed and photographed some beautiful snow covered lakes and mountains.

H) Arrived back in Skagway ~ 4 pm. I got off the bus in the city for a walking tour on my own.
Our 6-hour bus tour: Fraser to Skagway
A) We boarded the bus at the train in Fraser.
B) Stopped at the road sign for Yukon.
C) Drove north for photos at Emerald Lake.
D) Stopped at Caribou Crossing Trading Post. Drove past the Carcross Desert.
E) Stopped at Carcross Commons Village.
F) Stopped for a bear next to the road.
G) Great views of snow on the mountains.
H) Railroad dock in Skagway.

It’s a 58 mile, scenic drive along the lakes from A) Fraser to C) Emerald Lake.
The drive from A) to C) takes 1 hour and 12 minutes if you do not stop along the route.
As you head north from Fraser, you will come to an area where there are lakes on the right side of the bus with steep mountains along the road on the left side of the bus.
It’s a gorgeous area and there is the possibility of spotting wildlife in the mountains and near the lakes.
We saw a black bear next to the road at F) and several goats at the top of the mountains.
This Aerial Map shows detail on the topography. It’s a gorgeous area.
B) Road sign entering Yukon Territory  GPS = 60°00'02.2"N 134°39'44.5"W

C) Emerald Lake  GPS = 60°16'07.0"N 134°44'45.3"W
There is a sign at Emerald Lake with this description of the lake.

Artful Chemisty

The beautiful blue-green colour of Emerald Lake is created by sunlight reflecting off a white layer of “marl” on the lake bed. Marl is a white calcium carbonate (CaCO₃) clay that forms in the water and then settles, often unevenly, onto the lake bottom. It forms when enough carbonate (CO₃), from dissolving limestone, reacts with calcium (Ca) in the water.

The limestone hills around you were created 150 – 200 million years ago by reef-building corals growing in a warm sea. Corals and lime-secreting algae cemented themselves together in 100 metres of water where there was sunshine and clear water. As the water gradually rose the coral reef built upon itself, growing toward the light.

This valley was covered by a glacier during the last ice age and shallow lakes were formed when the glaciers retreated 14,000 years ago. Retreating ice deposited limestone gravel, eroded from the surrounding hills, on the valley floor. The carbonate rich gravel affected the ground water and led eventually to the formation of marl in the lake.

Diatoms are an algae commonly found in shallow lakes like this one. They form a unique external structure composed of calcium carbonate from the water and when they die, their shells contribute to the layer of marl. If you could look closely at the marl layer you would see tiny land snail shells and many diatom cases such as the one illustrated here.

See the Canadian website [http://sightsandsites.ca/south/site/emerald-lake](http://sightsandsites.ca/south/site/emerald-lake)

D) Caribou Crossing Trading Post  GPS = 60°11'42.1"N 134°42'09.6"W

This is one of the most amazing tourist sites I’ve ever visited. I was unprepared because I didn’t realize there are more things to do than you have time for in your 90 minute bus stop.

Princess shore excursion description: “At the Caribou Crossing Trading Post satisfy your wilderness appetite with a delicious chicken barbecue lunch complete with all-you-can-eat home made donuts. After your meal, tour Yukon's most extensive Wildlife Museum. Stroll among creatures of Yukon's past and present, with favorites including steppe bison, grizzly bears, monster moose, woolly mammoth and the world's largest mounted polar bear. Absorb some authentic Canadian culture at the at Caribou Crossing’s newest exhibit, a Royal Canadian Mounted Police heritage center. This interpretive display focuses on the history of Canada's "Mounties" and highlights their role during the Klondike Gold Rush. Stop at the Dog Musher's Village where you can visit with Iditarod dog mushers and take pictures with the sled dogs and husky puppies. For an extra fee, you may join them for a dog cart ride. Kids and adults alike will also enjoy the petting farm.”

I wish the Princess excursion description had cited the website for Caribou Crossing Trading Post.

See [www.cariboucrossing.ca/](http://www.cariboucrossing.ca/)

This website has detailed descriptions of all the things you can see and do plus photos and a video of the site. You have free access to the museums when your tour includes a paid lunch. But there are fees for some of the activities. You may want to book the fee based activities on line because they may be sold out when many tour buses are at the site when your bus arrives.

I did not realize that Caribou Crossing offers so much and that you can’t see it all in 90 minutes. Had I realized how impressive this site is, I would have spent less time at lunch and possibly even skipped the lunch I had paid for to have more time to explore this amazing site.

There are two museums:

- I spent a lot of time at the Wildlife Museum. It is amazing.
- Unfortunately, I did not have time to visit the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Museum.

I spent some time watching the huskies get set up to take off running pulling the carts.

But I didn’t have time to visit the kennels to see, photograph and pet, the husky puppies. Drats, curses, and rats! I’m a dog lover and I missed the opportunity to visit the puppies.

Don’t make my mistake. Check the Caribou Crossing Trading Post website [www.cariboucrossing.ca/](http://www.cariboucrossing.ca/) before your cruise to learn about all the things you can see and do to plan how you will spend your limited time.
My photos of Caribou Crossing Trading Post Wildlife Museum
The wildlife museum has amazing detail, a perfect setting for the displays, and incredible, life-like positions of the animals. This is the work of “world class taxidermists and artists”.

Trumpeter Swan

Albino Red Squirrels

Red Tailed Hawk
Displays cover ancient times to present day beasts. You’ll see a variety of small critters such as the squirrels to large animals including grizzly bears, moose, bison, a life-size woolly mammoth, and the World's largest polar bear. The larger animals are displayed in an open area with high ceilings.

The animals are very life-like and often posed in highly animated positions such as this bear reaching for a Hoary Marmot. Note the bear’s incredibly large claws. Wow!
The display includes several large bears.

A Bison Family
The displays show animals such as this Steppe Bison being attacked.
This Peary Caribou is being pursued by two Artic Wolves.

Wooly Mammoths roamed the Yukon until approximately 10,000 years ago. Adult bulls consumed over 500 pounds of food a day, weighed over 15,000 pounds, and had tusks over 8 feet long. They feared no predator.
I spent time watching the dog teams get ready to run pulling the cart.

The trainer signals the dogs to run
This is the dog cart you can ride for a fee. You can’t tell from this photo, but the dogs are running very fast. Note that the 4th dog from the front is looking at me taking his picture.
Carcross Desert  GPS =  60°11′16.2″N 134°41′48.5″W  It’s next to Caribou Crossing Trading Post  
Visit the Yukon government websites for details, see http://sightsandsites.ca/south/site/carcross-desert 

“It looks like a desert … but it is really the remains of an ancient lake. If this were a real desert, it would have a hot, dry climate. The Carcross Dunes are a result of a glacial process. About 10,000 years ago, the great ice sheets that covered much of North America were melting. Ice dams created a series of glacial lakes that submerged some valleys under 300 metres of melt water. A layer of sand and silt, which had been trapped in the glaciers, settled to the bottom of these lakes in a thick layer.  
Glacial lake Watson disappeared with the glaciers. The Watson River cut through the lake bottom sediments and continues to bring sand and silt into Bennett Lake. This constant supply of sand makes the Carcross Dunes a truly dynamic system.  
Glacial retreat from the Watson, Wheaton, and Yukon river valleys allowed the glacial lakes to expand. The Cowley Creek outlet, south of Whitehorse, drained glacial lake Watson as the ice retreated south and east. Old beaches along Bennett Lake match the Cowley Creek outlet elevation which means that Carcross was once submerged under 120 metres of water.”

See https://www.ehcanadatravel.com/1-yukon/southern-lakes/carcross/parks-places/5548-carcross-desert.html

“Carcross Desert in Carcross, Southern Lakes, Yukon Territories, Canada is a recreation and sightseeing destination located north of the community of Carcross. The 260 hectare desert dunes are referred to as "The World's Smallest Desert " and are located at the 107 Kilometre Marker on the South Klondike Highway. The sand dunes are busy year round. During the summer months the dunes are popular for activities like sand-boarding, hiking, ATVing and off roading. In the winter the dunes are covered with snow which tends to attract activities like cross country skiing, snowmobiling and snowboarding. The sand dunes are the last remains of a glacial lake left behind from the ice age. The lake now gone, left the sand exposed to the elements. The sand dunes are still going through changes as the winds blow hard off of Bennett Lake rearranging the dunes, making life extra hard on the plant life. The plants that do live in the Carcross Desert are tough. Some are protected species. All are able to survive the harsh conditions. Some of the plants in the desert include Lodgepole Pine Trees, Kinnikinnick, Blue-eyed Mary, Mutton Grass, Nelson's Needlegrass, Arctic Aster, Rosy Pussytoes, Alaskan Wild Rye, Showy Jacob's-ladder, Alaskan Locoweed and Threetoothed Saxifrage.”

Note: I downloaded the photo above from Pinterest. This photo is not on the government website.

See pages 32 & 33 for information on Emerald Lake and Carcross Desert
This map shows the size of Carcross Desert and its location next to Caribou Crossing Trading Post.

If you look closely at this map, you'll see 18 tour buses at Caribou Crossing Trading Post. Wow!

Carcross Desert is 1125 feet south of Caribou Crossing Trading Post. The desert is ~3360 feet long and 2380 feet wide.

Why don't the tour buses stop at the desert???
E) Carcross Commons Native Village  GPS = 60°09'56.1"N 134°42'21.8"W

This aerial view and list of facilities at this site is from the website http://destinationcarchcross.ca/shop/ Visit this outstanding website. It has a detailed description of all of the shops and places to visit. There are several excellent arts and crafts shops and stores selling souvenirs. The website is a “perfect” introduction for first time visitors with details on things to see and do. I wish Princess Cruises referenced this website in their shore excursion description.
It’s a clean, colorful interesting place with several buildings offering a wide range of products. There were very few visitors at this site when we visited it in the afternoon on May 28, 2017 and some buildings were closed.

Our bus driver highly recommended that we stop for ice cream. Several people did.
The totem poles were impressive.
**F) Stop to take photos of a bear next to highway**  
**GPS = 59°55'24.3"N 134°46'39.3"W**

Our driver spotted a beautiful, large black bear next to the road.  
She pulled the bus over and stopped so we could take photos from inside the bus.  
The bear was quick to move when it saw the bus stop.  
We only had a few seconds to get a picture before the bear disappeared into the forest.  
I believe the bear had several cubs, but I did not see them.  
Keep an eye out for wildlife when traveling on Klondike Highway.

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**G) Snow Covered Lakes & Mountains**  
**GPS = 59°39'16.2"N 135°07'38.4"W**

The bus ride south from Fraser to the Alaska US border is one of the most scenic areas on the bus tour. Keep your camera handy to photograph high mountain tops covered with snow with lakes in the foreground, next to Klondike Highway Rte 2. Driving time is only 14 minutes and the bus does not stop until we reached the Alaska US Border. See some of my photos on the next page.
Snow covered mountains.

There are many postcard photo opportunities.
Rental Car Touring Roundtrip from Skagway to Emerald Lake in Canadian Yukon

When I published the Part 1 Skagway Guide, my good friend Linda Safier contacted me to suggest I include information on rental car touring in my Skagway guides.

Comments by Linda Safier:

- Avis car rental is in walking distance to the ship.
- A passport is a must to go into the Yukon.
- You travel at a leisurely pace when you drive yourself and stop when and where you want.
- In Carcross, you can stamp your passport. There are a few places to grab a snack or a meal. You can also spend time at the Caribou Crossing Trading Post.
- I always turn around at Emerald Lake and head back to Skagway.
- I recommend my clients google Murrays guide [http://murraysguide.com/](http://murraysguide.com/)
- He charges $5 for the guide, and it's worth it.

End of Comments by Linda Safier:

Excerpt from Murray’s Guide website. This is an excellent resource for rental car touring.

Murray's Guide to the South Klondike Highway

Narration and photos by Murray Lundberg

Latest update: July 19, 2017

As of May 14, 2014, there is a FREE version of the guide, An Explorer's Guide to the South Klondike Highway. Although much shorter than the paid version, it's still more complete and much more current than the other 2 guides to that highway worth noting, Bell's and the one published by the Skagway News.

This 33-page, mile-by-mile guide (with 54 photos) will show you the points of interest along the South Klondike Highway and the Dyea Road. The South Klondike Highway runs 98 miles (157.7 km) from Skagway (Alaska) through Fraser (British Columbia) and Carcross (Yukon) to the Alaska Highway at a point 10 miles east of Whitehorse. Officially it is just the Klondike Highway, running 443 miles (713 km) from Skagway to Dawson City, but in practical use the highway sections north and south of Whitehorse are used separately.

This 2-lane paved highway takes you through an amazing variety of scenery, from granite peaks to desert, with pristine lakes around every corner. It is truly a photographer's dream trip.

The guide has been written by Murray Lundberg. I was a driver/guide for Alaska-Yukon cruisetours for 17 years and in recent years operated Cruise Explorer Travel, specializing in Alaska, and small ships around the world. In late 2014, I retired to enjoy even more travel. I live at the north end of this highway and drive to Skagway year-round, usually 15-20 times each year.

The vast majority of the people who have used this guide since it was first posted in 2003 have been cruise ship passengers who rent a car in Skagway to make the drive, so the guide runs from Skagway north.

I recommend that a minimum of 5 hours be allowed for the trip from Skagway to Emerald Lake and back. For cruise ship passengers, I recommend Emerald Lake as the turn-around point so that they have time to see Skagway, and because the scenery north of Emerald Lake is nowhere near as dramatic as what has been seen to that point.

Your trip will probably be more enjoyable if you avoid the tour bus rush - that means heading north as soon as you get your car, and avoiding Caribou Crossing in particular between ~ 11:30 and 1:30.

End of comments from Murray’s Guide
Advantages of Renting a car in Skagway and driving to Emerald Lake

The ship’s excursion bus tour and rental car cover the same driving route, but when you rent a car:

1. You have complete freedom to spend time as you choose. You are not restricted to the rigid schedule of a bus tour.
2. The driving route is through a breathtakingly beautiful area. Taking pictures from a car is infinitely better than from a bus. In a bus, you have problems with reflections on the windows. If you are in a car, you can pull over to the side of the road, open the window, or step outside to take all the pictures you want.
3. In a car, you can stop to visit places of interest that are not scheduled bus stops such as the world famous Carcross Desert. You might want to rent a jeep if you plan to drive across Carcross Desert.
4. In a car, you can spend as much time as you want to see “everything” at Caribou Crossing Trading Post. I didn’t have the time I wanted/needed to explore this amazing site on our bus tour.
5. When you return to Skagway from your driving tour of the Yukon, you can use the car to explore the areas 2 miles north of Skagway city such as the Gold Rush Cemetery and Lower Reid Falls. Then you can drive to different locations in Skagway for a tour with minimal walking. This is a great way to enjoy a personal tour of the city for people who lack the energy to walk long distances or have mobility problems. For details on tourist sites in Skagway city, see my Part 1 Skagway Guide.
6. Car rental is a low cost tour option if you have four or six people to share the cost of the car or van.
7. Cruise ships usually dock for ~ 12 hours in Skagway. You’ll have more than enough time for a driving tour to from Skagway to Emerald Lake.

Disadvantages of renting a car

It’s not for everyone. If you are uncomfortable renting a car, don’t do it.

Preparing for Car Rental

I like to rent cars tour in scenic, rural areas. I have written driving tour guides for several ports in northeastern Canada, Ireland, and Santorini Greece.

To prepare for my drive, I determine GPS coordinates for all the important stops along the route. Then, I program my Garmin GPS with all the stops and save them as “favorites” on my GPS before I leave home. I carry my Garmin GPS with me when I rent a car. While driving, I always know where I am, and time to the next stop. I can check return time to the rental agency by choosing the car rental as my destination. This way, I always know when I need to turn around to get back to the ship on time.

Car Rental Options in Skagway

Avis Car Rental at Westmark Inn (AK8)  https://www.avis.com/en/locations/us/ak/skagway/ak8
Address: 3rd Street and Spring Street, Skagway, AK, 99840, USA
Phone: 907-983-2247

Alaska Green Jeep Tours: Private, Custom Tours You Drive Yourself  https://www.alaskagreenjeeptours.com/
Address: Between 4th and 5th on the right side of Broadway inside the Yukon Heath's Popcorn Emporium.
Phone: 907 983-3512

Better than just another rental car, Alaska Green Jeep Tours offers you all the freedom of a rental with the convenience of a tour! A one-hour-plus audio CD provides plenty of local history and lore. We also have a mile-by-mile guide that features all of the historic and scenic stops!

Why We're Different:

Alaska Green Jeep Tours offers the only tour of its kind in Skagway! You have your own personal Jeep for the entire day... it's part rental car, part tour, and the best of both! Stop and go at your leisure, visit the sights that interest you and skip those that don't. We'll provide you with all the information you'll need for a memorable day in both Skagway and the Yukon.
The map below shows the location of the car and jeep rental companies and the cruise ship Railroad, Broadway, and Ore Docks.

This table lists key points of interest on your driving route with GPS coordinates, distance from the start, and typical driving time from start.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>GPS Coordinates</th>
<th>Miles Driven</th>
<th>Driving Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avis Car Rental 3rd and Spring St. Skagway</td>
<td>59°27'13.7&quot;N 135°18'59.4&quot;W</td>
<td>Start = 0 miles</td>
<td>Start = 0 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska, US/British Columbia Canada Border</td>
<td>59°37′46.5″N 135°09′50.2″W</td>
<td>14.3 miles</td>
<td>29 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser, British Columbia, Canada</td>
<td>59°42′53.6″N 135°02′47.8″W</td>
<td>22 miles</td>
<td>43 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carcross Commons Native Village</td>
<td>60°09'56.1&quot;N 134°42'21.8&quot;W</td>
<td>65 miles</td>
<td>1 hour 52 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribou Crossing Trading Post (Carcross Desert is next to the trading post)</td>
<td>60°11'42.1&quot;N 134°42'09.6&quot;W</td>
<td>67.3 miles</td>
<td>1 hour 57 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerald Lake in the Southern Lakes area</td>
<td>60°16'07.0&quot;N 134°44'45.3&quot;W</td>
<td>73 miles</td>
<td>2 hours 4 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Driving time shown is with light road traffic and without stopping along the route. The most scenic area for photos of the snow covered mountains and lakes is between Alaska, US/British Columbia Canada border and Fraser British Columbia, Canada.
User Feedback Is Welcome

Goal
My guides are designed to help you plan a great cruise vacation by providing information such as where the ship docks, location of tourist sites, public transit, walking tour maps, things to see and do, travel issues unique to the port, etc. Knowledge of ports is important when planning shore excursions because you have to make many decisions and commitments long before your ship docks. I believe the information in this guide is accurate, however you are responsible to verify accuracy of the information that you use to plan your vacation. Information on cruise ports frequently changes such as bus routes, admission fees to sites, rental car locations, etc. Cruise Critic is the best source for up-to-date, detailed information on travel details for shore excursions, reviews of cruise ships, etc. There are many knowledgeable people on Cruise Critic who are willing to share their expertise and travel experience. I highly recommend www.CruiseCritic.com; it's free to join.

Why feedback is important
User feedback helps me make corrections and improve the format and content in my quest to produce the “ultimate” port guides. I welcome offers to collaborate with me or provide materials for use in my guides.

PLEASE Help “spread the word” about my website
The only negative feedback I get is, “I wish I knew about your port guides before my vacation”. Please tell your friends and post a reference to my guides and website on the blogs. To receive email notification when new guides are available, send your email address to me at TomsPortGuides@gmail.com

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A blatant example of violation of my copyright was a cruise ship docked in Copenhagen where the shore excursion desk personnel removed maps from my guide, removed my name as the copyright owner, and copied/distributed my maps.
Fortunately, a friend of mine on that ship complained to the purser and the ship stopped violating my copyright.

If there is any question about use of my guides, contact me at TomsPortGuides@Gmail.com

Tom Sheridan