



Zuma's
Paw Prints

Summer Activities for Sled Dog Fans

May 4, 2006

Hi Boys and Girls,

Several of my young friends have written to ask what happens during the time when the race is not going on. What do the dogs do during when there is no Iditarod Race going on?

There are a lot of things that happen after the race finishes. Not the least of these things is the arrival of spring. Then the summer begins with green grass and leafy trees. Neither of those two events have taken place yet, but Lois says that I need to be patient because there will be warm grass for me to roll around in. What I am seeing out there is bare ground and brown grass!



I'm ready for summer with the tourists coming to visit my home. It is impossible for a summer tourist to see and experience everything Alaska has to offer in just one trip and we find many people coming back year after year. What they don't know and we are not going to tell them, is that no matter how many times they come back, they will never see all of Alaska or take part in all of Alaska's experiences. It would take several lifetimes to do that.

The summer season for Iditarod headquarters begins on Memorial Day weekend with the start of the summer hours. On that weekend, we begin keeping the museum and gift shop open seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. We also begin having dogcart rides from 9 to 5 each day. The cart will carry four people at a time on the 5-minute loop through the woods here at HQ. The girls in the gift shop are stocking the shelves with lots of new Iditarod items for you to take home so be sure to check that out too.

Raymie Redington and his team show the tourist what it is like to be behind a team of some of the toughest dogs you will ever met. Lois and I always take a ride at the very beginning of the season just so we know what to tell folks about it and to check out the cart and dogs before it opens to the public. Besides, there is something exciting about being pulled around a team of sled dogs, particularly for a Husky like me. Raymie is a great person to talk to about the race. His father started the Iditarod and Raymie ran the first Iditarod and many more before he retired from racing a couple of years ago. He has two sons who are carrying on the Redington tradition of having at least one Redington in every race. There is a "checkpoint cabin" at the head of the dog trail and tourists are welcome to take pictures of it and the cache that sits nearby.



Before or after the ride, a visit to the museum and gift shop is in order. All of the wood materials for this beautiful log building are Alaskan except for the laminated roof decking which is not available in our State. There is a total of 3,600 square feet on the main floor and a 1,600 square foot basement that houses the Iditarod mail order department. The main floor and the loft house the business offices.

The logs for the building are white spruce from the Rosie Creek area near Nenana, Alaska. The ridgepole and purlin logs are 58 feet long. The ridgepole diameter is 34 inches at the base and 22 inches at the tip. Log Weavers of Alaska did the log work. The front doors, display cabinets, and paneling are handcrafted of polished birch from Poppert Mill in Wasilla, Alaska. The trim above and below is made of Alaskan cottonwood.



Inside you will find Togo, the dog that led Leonhard Seppela's team during the 1925 serum run. Togo and his team ran more miles than any other team in that serum run. You will also find Rick Swenson's famous lead dog, Andy, who led Rick to victory three of the four times he won the Iditarod. There are photo displays, old newspapers, sleds and trophies and more for you to view. There is a video that is played as needed. The video is approximately 20 minutes long so there is not a long wait if it is already running when you arrive. It gives you time to look around the other room. Lois usually tells people to plan on an hour, but I think that if you go through the museum, watch the video, shop and go for a cart ride and then spend some time petting puppies and talking to Raymie, you should plan at least an hour and a half.

I might add that if you are going to be out and about in Alaska in the summer, you should bring along something to repel mosquitoes. These flying, biting, stinging monsters are HUGE! You do not want to face off with one of them without a weapon of some kind. They are particularly fond of tourists. I think it is the variety of tastes that tourists from other areas have. Whatever the reason, beware of the Alaska mosquito.

Today's weather in Wasilla, Alaska is partly sunny with clouds moving in and temperatures in the low to mid 50's. Twilight began at 4:41 a.m. with the sun rising at 5:40 a.m. The sun will set at 10:11 p.m. and it will be dark at 11:11 p.m. In Nome, the temperature is 32 with clear skies. The twilight began in Nome at 5:08 a.m. and the sun rose at 6:23 a.m. The sun will set in Nome at 11:36 p.m. tonight and it will not be full dark until 12:53 a.m. tomorrow morning. Even though it gets light in Wasilla earlier than in Nome, they are getting more daylight than we are. Soon it won't get dark in either place at night. I like those long days, but they sure can wear you out. There is so much to do and see.

I particularly like camping and fishing in the summer time. When camping in the summer in Alaska, you can sit up around a campfire and talk all "night" if you are not careful. I always keep everyone posted on any animal activity near the camp. It is not unusual to see a rabbit or two or a porcupine when out camping or a b-b-bear! Oh my, bears are really scary when they come around camp. In the areas that we go camping, grizzlies are what we see most often. In a couple of areas, we have seen a black bear or two. They are not as big or as dangerous as the grizzlies, but they still could kill a human or a dog if they wanted to. I avoid both!

I'll tell you about some of the other places to visit in the summer time in my next Paw Print.

Until then,



Lots of Tail Wags,
Zuma