

## Skaguay, Alaska

Written by

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[Skagway](#) , (also spelled Skaguay) is a small city (?) that played an essential part in the gold rush days and we arrived here at 6:00 AM this morning. It is located 108 miles from Whitehorse in the Northwest Territories and is considered the "garden city" of Alaska. Our excursion today would take us on a narrated bus ride to the [Jewell Gardens](#) for an organic (yay) lunch and then on to Fraser, BC where we would board the [White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad](#).

The gardens were beautiful and our hostess filled us in on some of the facts about the quaint town/city of Skaguay. Though in the gold rush days, Skagway's population soared to as high as 20,000, today it has roughly 870 year-round residents. The major source of income is derived from the 850,000+ visitors that come here every summer, 750,000 of them via cruise ship. There is one school from kindergarten to grade 12 that provides the education to the 110 students (teacher/student ratio is 1:7), no hospital (but a health clinic) and no dentist or doctor in town (a doctor comes in once a month). There is one grocery store and if you don't get there by Wednesday, the staples you need may be sold out until the following week and Whitehorse, the biggest nearest city is a two-hour drive away. In the deep winter the residents can enjoy a full 27 minutes of sunshine, if it shines at all, but in the summer they can get 22 hours of daylight. Houses are very expensive (a two bedroom basic bungalow is roughly \$250,000 US) and a gallon of milk is \$4.50 while a gallon of gas sells for \$3.00.

From the Gardens (the lunch was awesome) we were driven to Fraser, BC, which consists of 9 residents, all of them customs officials and their families, to cross the border then turn into the parking lot of the train station! The 27-mile train ride back to Skagway was spectacular and it enabled us to see some of the really rugged terrain in the mountains where they can receive as much as 70 feet of snow in the winter. Once we returned to town, Rick and I wandered around the shops before returning to the ship by 7:30 PM, for our scheduled departure sailing time of 8:00 PM. Tomorrow we are going to Wrangell, an original Alaskan town, as of yet, still untouched by the tourism so lacking the multitude of jewellery stores found at every port so far...should be interesting.