



Kodiak Raspberry Island Remote Lodge

Birch and Tiffany Robbins
PO Box 888 ~ Kodiak, Alaska ~ 99615

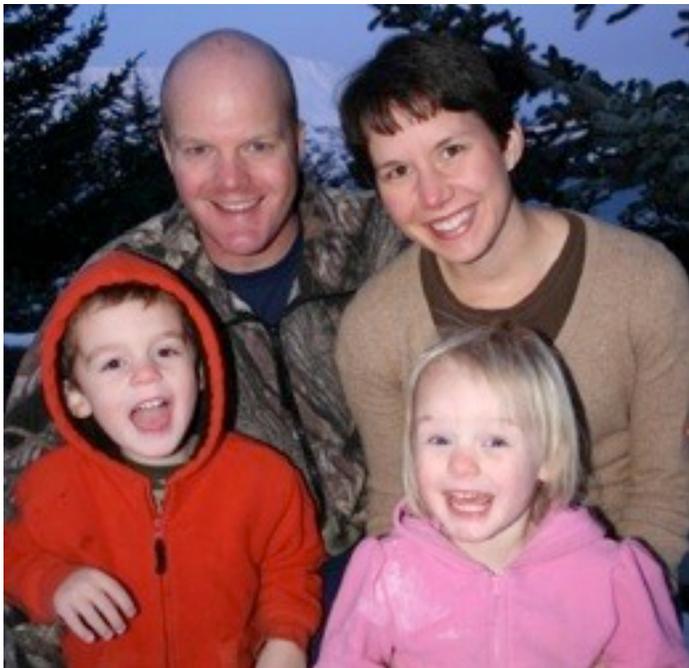
Newsletter 2009

vacation@raspberrylisland.com

www.raspberrylisland.com

Many Thanks!!!

We would like to start our second annual newsletter with a very sincere, heart-felt thank you to the many of you who visited us, supported us, recommended us, and kept in touch with us this summer. 2009 was another amazing year, and we can't do this without you. You truly are the pulse of the business that makes our life on Raspberry Island possible. Thank you so very much!! You have certainly enriched *our* lives, and we look forward to creating this newsletter so we may all share and reminisce about the good times, adventures, and laughs had in this beautiful wilderness. *Cheers!!!*



New Website

As I write this, Sundog Media in Anchorage, Alaska is going through the final stages of updating our website. This has been in the works almost immediately after updating our site last year. We are very excited to finally get it published, utilizing many of the pictures and video you shared with us from this past summer. Please feel free to visit our summer site; www.raspberrylisland.com, to see the new changes.



Lodge and Facility Updates

We had a busy winter and spring this year! We put a new bamboo floor in the kitchen, a new, pitched roof over the sunroom, new tile floor in the sunroom (part of making that room our new main entry), installed a decorative heater that operates on heating fuel, and painted everything. We replaced the hot tub with a brand new Hot Springs 'Grandee,' and it was enjoyed by many this summer. Thanks to consistently beautiful weather in May and June we were able to erect a new weigh for the *Gemini* on our North Beach, and used it to paint the entire boat. We also leveled and prepared a large part of the North Beach with a fire pit and sitting area. Our hydro system performed flawlessly this summer, aside from a drought in June, and after tuning down the alternator, the solar panels were able to kick in and are a big help. We're looking forward to pursuing the many new ideas we have for improvements in the near future!





New Fishing Gear

As promised in last year's newsletter, we invested in new fishing reels. However, contrary to what was promised last year, we settled on a different brand--Accurate Reels made here in the USA. We are very impressed with the workmanship, ease of use, and big fish handling these reels bring to the decks of the *Gemini*. Everyone loved the 2 speed feature on the halibut reels--like a bicycle, just put the reel in first gear to horse up a big halibut, or second to wind up and check your bait. Drags are smooth and the handles are easy to grab and crank with. We love them!! We continue to enjoy our 9 foot G Loomis trolling rods and short Lamiglas stand up halibut rods. As we explored deeper water and different areas it was nice to have this equipment in our arsenal.

Granny is Retiring

Granny Cilla, Birch's Mom, is retiring. After building this entire facility and home as a family, raising three kids, and living the bush lifestyle for over 25 years, she will settle into her new home in Wasilla, Alaska, with her friend Dan. Since Tiffany and I purchased the lodge in 2008 she has been our kayaking and hiking guide, as well as 'high end consultant,' gardener, and Granny extraordinaire! Living in the Wasilla area ourselves as we began our family, Tiffany and I know she will love it! I know she has already been out making friends, settling in, and catching Rainbows on her fly rod!!



You Tube and Facebook

When marketing this lodge as a potential destination it has always been our goal to present the interested traveler with as much information about this place as possible. Our website is very extensive and is going through more updates, our scrapbook within the webpage is meant to catalogue each guests' experiences in pictures and often comments you leave in the cabin logbooks, and this newsletter will hopefully keep you up to date on what we are up to. To add to that, we purchased a waterproof video camera and a 'hat cam,' and, when I have time, am starting to upload the results up onto You Tube. If you are interested, each of our video's titles begin with 'Kodiak Raspberry Island Remote Lodge,' so just do a search for the lodge name in You Tube and you should be able to find us.

For you Facebook enthusiasts we also have a Facebook fan site, also Kodiak Raspberry Island Remote Lodge, that I have begun to update every day in the summer. Included are a number of videos, pictures, and of course fan comments!! We welcome you to join as a fan and invite your friends! If you aren't into the Facebook thing, a display window at the bottom of the new website will have all of my daily updates displayed--so you can see what is going on without joining Facebook.



Iowa Pacific Processors

Many thanks to Mike and Co for the amazing hand selected prime steaks we exclusively purchase from his company, Iowa Pacific Processors. They really are delicious, and an excellent addition to Tiffany's menu, which focuses primarily on fresh local seafood. Thanks guys!!



Programs we're involved with

As some of you know, we are fortunate to be involved with a variety of different groups who have chosen us as a vacation destination. Casting for Recovery is a wonderful program offering support and education through fly fishing for women who have or have had breast cancer, Limbs for Life offers support for amputees, the Coastal Conservation Association concentrates on protecting marine fisheries resources through conservation of marine animal and plant life, Ducks Unlimited focuses on protecting and saving wetlands, Becoming an Outdoors Woman is an educational program aimed at introducing and helping women feel more comfortable in the outdoor world--the list is humbling and we are so very thankful to be exposed to such wonderful people with such selfless goals. Thank you to the very generous people who purchased packages from us to donate, and thank you to the participants for bidding on thoes packages and your contributions to the foundations above!!

Mischief in the Vines

Welcome a new member into our extended family of advisors--Victor Bodanyi, *sommelier*. Vic has generously offered to pair Tiffany's menu up with some great wines; we're excited to start getting boxes from Vic!! We're also excited to share his recommendations with you.



Independent Chalet



We are offering a completely different option here at Kodiak Raspberry Island Remote Lodge next year. The Independent Chalet is the latest name for the cabin my folks built for Tiffany and I when we were married--it is a beautiful, fully functioning cabin with indoor bathroom, kitchen, living room, and bedroom loft. We are offering it as an independent way to visit Raspberry Island, for guests interested in just coming, hanging out, and operating on your own schedule. While separate from the lodge and the goings on here, it is still close enough to enjoy a thermostatically controlled heater, running water, and even wireless internet! Details will be listed on the updated website and of course we are always here to answer specific questions.



New Kayaks and Kayaking

We are proud to announce the addition of four new Necky *Looksha* single person kayaks to our fleet this year. Similar to our five existing Necky *Amaruk* two person kayaks, these are stable, fun to paddle, sleek, and tough. We thought it would be nice to have the singles available for folks more interested in paddling alone, and of course have all the skirts, life jackets, and paddles to compliment each boat. Now that Granny has retired, we are excited to welcome Jack back to take her place--he was a huge help to us last summer as well. In his off time he would enjoy the locale kayaking, hiking, camping, and fishing, and we know he'll do a great job with his new responsibilities.

Big Fish

We had some amazing fishing this year!! We had some awesome halibut days, great combo salmon and halibut days, and some really great times mooching for silvers. Peg, your halibut was the biggest!! After limiting out on Kings, Silvers, and with one 40lb halibut onboard, Peg doubled up on Halibut (we've started using 2 hooks/rod this year), one was about 25 lbs, the other we estimate was close to 200! Way to go Peg, and congrats for letting such an amazing fish go.



I will admit that our King season this year was way below normal. We fished and fished and fished, and finally found a few kings over 50 miles away. State wide reports of few or no kings returning makes me thankful that we caught any at all! However, kudos this year go to Chris-- whose mom Meribeth holds the record for last year, with a fish at least twice the size of Chris's. :) The Kings did show up, but much later than normal.



Our fly fishers targeted a variety of species this year, starting in May with some really awesome fly fishing for Sockeye. We've been watching that return strengthen since we've been back, and are excited to see steady growth. Also fished for this year were Pinks, Chums, and of course Silvers. Extra bonuses were some great days with Dolly Varden, small Rainbows, and some nice early Steelhead!



Congrats to the ladies above for their tremendous catches! Just look at the size of that Dolly Varden and HUGE Black Rockfish!!! Certainly record holders, for sure! ;)

Other amazing fish stories must mention Terry, with his 122lb halibut on his spinning rod and 1oz jig. His rod broke half way through the fight-- Amazing mooching for silvers with Stacey, Paul, and Daryl limiting on halibut and silvers in one spot (on anchor!!) Rick and Andy make it happen AGAIN with Andy pulling a beauty halibut and Rick missing it with the harpoon, according to tradition.



Bear Viewing



Our bear viewing this summer was awesome. Fly out trips from the lodge constantly presented many of you with up close and personal visits into bear country, and the flights around Kodiak to get there are still stunning!! Though the standard four hour trip remains the most popular, many of our guests this summer chose the extended 5 hour glacier and bear viewing tour, to include more flying time and landing at the foot of a glacier!! New this year was a 2 1/2 hour flight-seeing tour, where guests simply enjoyed the flight--a great addition to an already diverse package of fishing, hiking, and kayaking. Thanks to our local pilots for such a great experience.

I must also mention the bears we saw from the boat and kayaks--never promised as they are so shy here on Raspberry and Afognak Islands--but one photographer was able to sneak up to within under 50 yards of a bear right here only a few miles from the lodge. Way to go Gary!!



Whales

Along with our King Salmon, I'm afraid our resident Fin Whales were late in arriving this year. My theory is that the warm stream of current that brings in the baitfish was perhaps delayed a few weeks? No baitfish, no King Salmon, no Whales.

Many of you remember the two to six Fins that typically live here at the mouth of Raspberry Straits--this year they would come in, turn around, and go back out. We missed them. However, we had some AMAZING whale watching this summer, most notable for me was the small family of Orcas that swam right next to the boat, one even right under us, rolled on his/her side to get a closer look!! I am happy to say I had video camera rolling and posted the vid both on You Tube and Facebook. It is worth watching.



Geo Cacheing and Hiking

Guests have recommended Geo Cacheing as a possible activity for Kodiak Raspberry Island Remote Lodge, so think we'll try it next year. Geo Cacheing is growing in popularity and utilizes a GPS to help find a hidden cache someone has stashed and uploaded the coordinates to the Geo Cacheing website. We thought it would be fun to place some caches with a notebook and have a GPS on hand with the coordinates already uploaded. Also popular is placing a 'treasure' in the cache to reward the finder--though a similar treasure must be left for the next Geo Cacher! Who wants to try it!! Advice is always appreciated and, as a new activity, if you'd like to bring your own Geo Cache to hide and record, let's do it!! It would blend in well with our existing Naturalist or Explorer Packages.

Pete the Eagle



Many of you had the pleasure of meeting Pete the Eagle this summer. Pete showed up on a local beach in June with a hurt wing. One morning we found him on our main beach presumably enjoying the fish scraps left from our fishermen. His wing did not fix itself and did not look good. Our summer SAS, Liz, contacted the Juneau Raptor Center, and with the help of ERA Aviation, some friends of ours were able to capture Pete, secure him in a small dog kennel, and fly him to help. In Juneau, the vets there discovered that Pete was actually a girl eagle and renamed her "Raspberry." They also unfortunately discovered that she had osteomyelitis, a bone infection, and had to put her to sleep. Thank you for visiting us Pete and we wish your story had a happier ending. We'll keep an eye on your family.

Tiffany's Cookbook

Tiffany continues to update her cookbook and served some tremendous new recipes this year. This year she introduced a phenomenal smoked salmon/artichoke dip, a delicious seafood fettucini complete with halibut cheeks, scallops, shrimp, smoked salmon flakes, roasted pine nuts, fresh veggies---and also I must mention her new halibut taco recipe with fresh homemade corn tortillas and peach salsa. As always we are happy to send it to you if you would like a copy.



Rates and Packages

Our rates will stay the same this year. We did LOWER the Explorer Package a little, mostly to simplify our Pricing Program. We would still like to offer our returning guests a 10% discount on our daily rate as a thank you for choosing us again. Most importantly, we look forward to preparing any customized package for you to best fit your interests and schedule. The week long packages listed on our website are a great example of what we can do, however, some of you stayed longer, and some fewer days, than a week. Please know it is easy for us to prepare any package you would like and submit it to you for review.



About Us

All is wonderful here on Raspberry Island. We are getting ready to head East (most of you call it 'Mid-West :)) to visit friends and family over the Christmas Holiday. Our season ended only a few days ago, and will spend the next few days shutting everything down, winterizing the cabins, putting everything away, and getting ready for our trip. Upon returning to Raspberry Island we look forward to keeping Fisher on track with his preschool, which is going pretty well, as long as his mind is into it. Sage is all little girl, full of mischief! Tiffany and I are enjoying relaxing, sleeping in (to 6:30), and drinking coffee in bed!

We would like to thank you again for all that you have done for us. We hope you had a very Merry Christmas and have a Happy New Year!!

Birch Tiffany Fisher Sage