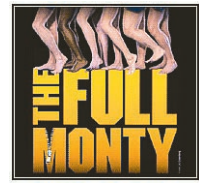


# TRAVEL

THE ROANOKE TIMES SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2010

## Take a Day Trip

**NEW! Oct. 20**  
**'The Full Monty'**  
 Windsor Hills United Methodist Church is sponsoring a trip to the performance at the Barter Theatre in Abingdon. The cost is \$72. For more information, call 774-7977.



For more day and overnight trips, see PAGE 5



Photo by Harry Bosen Jr.

Above: A mother grizzly named Melissa plays with her cub this summer in Alaska's Katmai National Park and Preserve. Below left: Harry Bosen Jr. crouches behind his camera in Alaska.



Photo by Holly Engelken

# Roar of life in wild Alaska

A Roanoke Valley resident walked with coastal grizzlies in one of Alaska's remote parks.



For a photo gallery of the trip, go online at [roanoke.com](http://roanoke.com)

By Ryan Tipps  
[ryan.tipps@roanoke.com](mailto:ryan.tipps@roanoke.com)

At one point on the Alaskan trip, a male grizzly came directly toward Harry Bosen Jr. and his group. Another time, Bosen drifted almost silently in a boat, watching a bear on the shore. Elsewhere, an uncommonly playful scene between a bear and wolf cubs unfolded in front of him.

More than 3,500 miles from the Roanoke Valley, Katmai National Park and Preserve brought Bosen within feet of the giant predators, which can reach 1,800 pounds, he said. The region is a mix of terrain: grassy plains, marshes and jagged shores near the water, and mountains edging the distance. Most of all, it's remote.

"There's no trails, unless you're walking on a bear trail," Bosen said. "The trails are made by bears."

Bosen, a lawyer in Salem, joined about half a dozen other travelers as well as guides as part of a nature tour with Green Planet Expeditions. He had been on tours with Green Planet before — to Uganda and the Galapagos Islands — and was versed in rather exotic travel. Steven Morello, director of Green Planet, knew the Katmai destination well, having spent 11 weeks with a documentary film crew there last summer.

The lodging for the weeklong trip was Spartan. The group stayed on a boat, the Kittiwake, which was a fishing vessel that had been featured on Discovery Channel's "America's Deadliest Catch." The quarters were close, a lone shower facility had to suffice and the dining area was tight. The group slept



Photo by Harry Bosen Jr.

It was "amazing" being in the presence of creatures that have such a notorious reputation, Harry Bosen Jr. said. Coastal grizzly bears in Katmai National Park and Preserve can reach up to 1,800 pounds, he said.

See BEARS, 5

Wish you were here!

### YOUR VACATION

We want your vacation postcards and photos! Mail postcards to:

Travel Editor  
 The Roanoke Times  
 201 W. Campbell Ave.  
 Roanoke, VA 24011

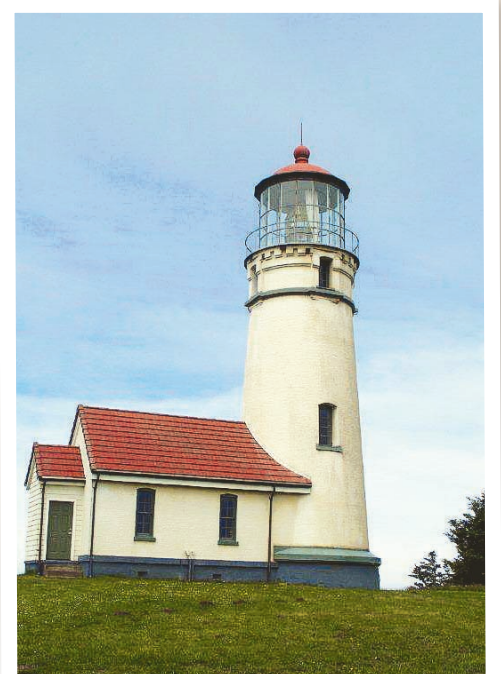
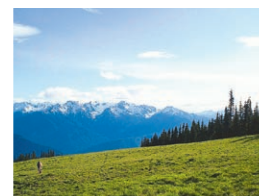
Or e-mail your photos and a brief explanation to Ryan Tipps at [travel@roanoke.com](mailto:travel@roanoke.com).

Please remember to include your name, address and daytime telephone number.



### Road trip across America

In June, Darrell and Susan Hensley of Roanoke traveled with their son, Ben Epperly, on a trip through 22 states. The vacation, which they dubbed their "help the national economy" road trip, took three weeks and covered 9,740 miles. They visited 16 national parks, and saw places such as San Francisco and the Oregon coastline.





DAY TRIPS

**NEW! Nov. 6 Shopping in Williamsburg**  
The Roanoke Parks and Recreation Department is sponsoring a trip to Williamsburg Pottery and Prime Outlets. The cost is \$75. For more information, call 853-1027. Register by Oct. 7 by calling 853-2236 or going online at [www.roanokeva.gov/playonline](http://www.roanokeva.gov/playonline).

**Sept. 11 'Shake Rattle and Roll'**  
The Botetourt County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism is sponsoring a bus trip to the matinee of "Shake, Rattle and Roll: A Rockin' Tribute to the King!" at Barter Theatre in Abingdon. Scot Bruce re-creates the music of Elvis Presley in this tribute. The cost is \$79 per person, which includes lunch and ticket. For more information, call 473-8326 or 366-2888.

**Sept. 22 Historic Danville**  
The History Museum of Western Virginia is sponsoring a trip to historic Danville, including the Langhorne house, the Tank & Ordnance War Memorial Museum and the Sutherland Mansion, which was the last Capitol of the Confederacy. The guided tour goes down Millionaire's Row, which is full of 19th and early 20th century mansions. The cost is \$65 for historical society members and \$75 for the general public. For more information, call 342.5770 or e-mail [info.hsvw@cox.net](mailto:info.hsvw@cox.net).

**Sept. 25 Baseball in Washington**  
The Roanoke Parks and Recreation Department is hosting a bus trip to see the Washington Nationals take on the Atlanta Braves. The cost is \$65 and includes ticket and transportation. Registration is due by Sept. 3. Go online at [www.roanokeva.gov/playonline](http://www.roanokeva.gov/playonline) or call 853-2236.

**Sept. 26 Riverboat and Pilot Mountain State Park**  
The Botetourt County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism is sponsoring a bus trip to Queen's Landing in Mooresville, N.C., and to Pilot Mountain State Park. The group will have a luncheon and sightseeing cruise aboard the Catawba Queen Riverboat. The cruise goes past many of homes of NASCAR legends. Afterward, the group will go to the state park, with hundreds of square miles of the Piedmont and the nearby mountains visible. The cost is \$69. For more information, call 473-8326 or 366-2888.

**Oct. 1 Siskland Farms Pumpkin Festival**  
The Roanoke Parks and Recreation Department is sponsoring a trip to the festival, where visitors can wander the grounds, take hay and carriage rides, buy pumpkins and fall decorations, and enjoy food and music. The trip will be from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Register by Sept. 24. For more information, call 853-1027. To register, call 853-2236 or visit [www.roanokeva.gov/playonline](http://www.roanokeva.gov/playonline).

**Oct. 2 Autumn at Oz**  
The Botetourt County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism is sponsoring a bus trip to the Autumn at Oz party at Beech Mountain,

N.C. The setting is complete with people and places from Frank Baum's silver screen classic. Upon arrival, you can take a bus or hay wagon to Oz or choose to walk the gentle uphill mile to Oz. There will be a mini-museum to visit and artifacts to share. The price is \$69 per person. For more information, call 473-8326 or 366-2888.

**Oct. 17 Fall foliage**  
The Botetourt County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism is sponsoring a bus trip to Clifton Forge, where the group will board an Amtrak train for a fall foliage ride to Charlottesville. In Clifton Forge, the group will visit the new Heritage Center, which is part of the former C&O historic freight depot. The downtown area will also be having a festival that day. The cost is \$89 per person. For more information, call 473-8326 or 366-2888.

**Oct. 23 James River Rambler Fall Foliage Train Ride**  
The Botetourt County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism is sponsoring a bus trip to Dillwyn to board the James River Rambler. This train ride is a historic and nostalgic journey into rural Buckingham County. The cost is \$89 per person and includes a boxed lunch. For more information, call 473-8326 or 366-2888.

**Oct. 30 Fall Foliage Mystery Bus Trip**  
The Botetourt County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism is sponsoring a trip to an area that it has never traveled to before. Lunch will be at a location where the group has never dined. Suspense and mystery will be the day's highlights. The cost is \$69 per person. For more information, call 473-8326 or 366-2888.

**Nov. 6 and 7 Trains to Danville and Bluefield**  
The Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society will offer two round-trip train excursions. The first, on Nov. 6, is between Roanoke and Danville; the second, on Nov. 7, is between Roanoke and Bluefield. There will be a layover of three hours in Danville and two and a half hours in Bluefield to participate in local activities. Coach seats are available for \$145 per adult or \$95 per child. Contact O. Winston Link Museum (982-5465), Virginia Museum of Transportation (342-5670) or the railway society (774-0611) during business hours, or go to [www.roanokenrhs.org](http://www.roanokenrhs.org) anytime. First-class seats, which are between \$215 and \$275, may be ordered by phone from the railway society.

**Nov. 13 Train trip to Washington**  
The Botetourt County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism is sponsoring a trip to Washington. The group will be bused to Lynchburg, where it will board the train. The trip will go through Charlottesville, Culpeper, Manassas and several other towns. The group will have 2 1/2 hours to enjoy the capital before returning home. The cost is \$110 per person. For more information, call 473-8326 or 366-2888.

more information.

**Sept. 27-Oct. 1 Florida sights**  
The Blacksburg Parks and Recreation Department is sponsoring a bus trip to Florida's Amelia Island and the cities of St. Augustine and Jacksonville. The cost is \$459 for Blacksburg residents and \$469 for non-residents based on double occupancy. The cost includes accommodations, breakfasts, dinners and a river cruise. For more information, contact Joy Herbert at 961-1134 or [jherbert@blacksburg.gov](mailto:jherbert@blacksburg.gov).

**Oct. 9-11 Outer Banks and lighthouses**  
The Botetourt County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism is sponsoring a bus trip to North Carolina's shore. Participants will visit Jockey Ridge, Roanoke Island and lighthouses at Currituck Beach, Bodie Island, Cape Hatteras and Ocracoke Island. The cost per person is \$450 single occupancy, \$375 double, \$355 triple and \$345 quadruple. For more information, call 473-8326 or 366-2888.

**Oct. 24-26 Atlantic City casinos**  
Vinton's Charles R. Hill Senior Center is sponsoring a trip to Atlantic City, N.J., where the group will stay at Bally's casino. The cost is \$180 per person based on double occupancy and includes starter breakfast and a \$60 player coupon. For reservations or more information, contact Penny Beyer at 983-0643.

We welcome trips organized by schools, clubs, churches and other nonprofit organizations. Send to [travel@roanoke.com](mailto:travel@roanoke.com) or call 981-3340



Photos courtesy of Harry Bosen Jr.

Sometimes travelers saw the Katmai grizzlies from several dozen yards away; other times, it was mere feet.

# BEARS: Grizzlies can be playful, predatory

FROM 6

four to a room; privacy was a premium.

The four-legged feature attraction, though, made the journey worthwhile.

"It's probably one of the most amazing trips I've ever been on," Bosen said.

The mid-June trip focused on two areas of Katmai: Kukak and Hallo bays. The summer mornings were chilly, with the mercury in the upper 30s. The afternoon warmth brought the temperatures into the 50s. In summer, the sun set for just a short time, a constant reminder of being so far north.

For the first part of the trip, the Kittiwake was anchored off of Kukak Bay, and Bosen had to take a skiff to shore. On land, a world of wildlife emerged before them that included wolves and eagles. But what was readily apparent, too, was that this was bear country.

"You're thrilled and awed and excited," Bosen said. "Being among animals that have a reputation for being dastardly killers ... and an animal that can turn on a dime from a peaceful leviathan into an abject killer for whatever reason it chooses, and being accepted by that animal and being ignored by that animal for the most part, accepted as part of the scenery ... was an experience."

He said the group had to make noise, as a warning, every time it went over a ridge. It the bears wanted to move, they would. Otherwise, they'd just sit there and let the people walk by.

"Of course, you give them as much berth as they seemingly need," Bosen said.

### Grizzlies bearing down

Each day was divided into morning and afternoon trips to land, with a break for lunch on the boat. During one approach to the shore of Kukak Bay, the group spotted a grizzly strolling along the water, stopping to scratch itself on the rocks.

Bosen's boat crept to within 20 yards, and one of the naturalist guides got out of the skiff to push it without the motor running. Bosen watched, fascinated. This time of year, many bears near the water eat grass because the salmon aren't there yet. The bears "graze like cattle," he said.

During the trip, one bear stood out to the group: Melissa. She became well-known to the film crew last year as a fiercely powerful and protective mother of two. Apparently, though, only one of her cubs made it through the winter.

The group watched Melissa and her cub, which they named Mitch, for a long while.

"She was a very accommo-



Coastal brown bears are adept at digging for razor clams near water sources. "They don't miss many," Harry Bosen Jr. said. "If they dig 10 holes, I bet they get eight clams."



The travelers stayed on the Kittiwake, a vessel that had been featured on the TV show "America's Deadliest Catch."



Wolves — which appeared at times cunning and other times frolicsome — are a common element of Katmai's food chain.



A bald eagle is perched on a log stump in Katmai National Park and Preserve's meadow grass.

dating bear for photography," Bosen said. "She doesn't care. She just wasn't threatened at all. If you just want to watch her, that's fine."

The serenity of watching Melissa was contrasted against a later encounter, when the group saw three males fighting over a female. As the males backed off from the leader one by one, the female took off — and chose a path straight toward the line of humans. A male followed, agitated and making what Bosen called "a guttural sound."

"We had a bit of anxiety," Bosen said. The guides were unarmed, save for a flare. The female turned to go around the group, missing that side of the line by just a few feet. The question was whether the male would do the same.

Luckily, he did. "The guide later told us, 'What I was concerned about was that he was going to rush through the line. He might not have bit anybody, but he could have knocked somebody over,'" Bosen recalled.

### Playful predators

Hallo Bay, cloaked by open pastures, "was beyond my wildest dreams," Bosen said. There, he said he got "even closer to the bears — because of the situation and setting — than I ever would have expected to be."

The Katmai coastal grizzlies are more colorful than he expected. Bosen said some sported dark brown fur, while others had other very distinct shades to them. Still, he enjoyed the bears that bore a "cinnamon" tint, which had elements of red to the fur.

He counted 22 bears at one time in the pasture by Hallo Bay. "These bears are used to people," he said.

So used to people are most of the grizzlies that it was within a few miles that bear enthusiast and filmmaker Timothy Treadwell spent about 13 seasons. Treadwell and his girlfriend, who spent much of their time in an area called the Grizzly Maze, were fatally mauled in 2003, and Treadwell's story was told in

the movie "Grizzly Man."

Bosen was aware that he wasn't at the top of the food chain in remote Alaska. But, in a sense, that was an integral part of the experience. It was mystical "being there with a top predator who is not acting like a predator toward you at all even though he had the opportunity."

Capturing the essence of the mysticism was watching a grizzly and some wolf cubs near a place called Nursery Ridge playing together.

Bosen said: "We watched something the guides had never seen. That is the wolves playing with their arch-enemies, the bears."

One of the wolf cubs picked up a plastic egg carton and played keep-away with the bear and other wolf.

In a region where there is a distinct pecking order — where mother bears have to protect their cubs from even their own kind — the playful accord was striking. It was a unique encounter that capped a unique walk with the bears.



Bad weather in Katmai National Park and Preserve always seemed to roll across the part of the mountains that Harry Bosen Jr. said was called Devil's Table. He said that the mountain, which is the backdrop for the whole Hallo Bay area, has never been climbed.