

Trip Report Big Sky 2018

Wednesday January 31

The A320 backed away from the gate with 20 of the original 23 in their seats. Shirley and Pat got off 5 minutes before the door closed due to a family emergency. Karen H was at home with a bad case of stomach flu. We arrived in Bozeman on time and soon we were grocery shopping at Albertsons, while Garrett ate a huge sub sandwich. 45 minutes later we were back on the road and soon we were at Big Sky. We unloaded the bus at the Summit hotel where a fleet of black Suburban's appeared and took us up to our condos. Dick L. who had driven up from Copper met his condo mates at M4 after enjoying a beverage at Moonlight Lodge. At 6:00 pm Josh from Big Sky resort showed up at Condo B5 with pizzas and beverages for everyone. We had rookie initiation for Paul T. Dick L. Peter H. and Sam L. We had them talk about their skiing experience and why they chose the Big Sky trip. By 8:00 everyone had returned to their condos with all their questions answered by Josh and their appetites satisfied to prepare for the first day of skiing.

Thursday February 1

We woke to a light dusting of 1 to 2 inches of fresh snow. The lifts open at 9 and almost everyone was out at that time, I won't mention that Garrett was supposed to pick up Gary at 8:45 and didn't come out until about 9:30. Needless to say Gary didn't wait. Rumer has it that Garrett was talking to his girlfriend. Garrett, just bring her next time!!! Mike and Sally headed to the top of Lone Peak their first run, braving the high winds they dropped down into Liberty bowl and ripped up the runs like seasoned veterans. Felix L, Sam L, Ben B, and Chris S stayed in the shadow of Moonlight doing some pow tree skiing. They later met up with Laura and Mark P and skied Double and Single Jack runs. Others were seen doing laps on some of Moonlights famed blue cruisers.

Friday February 2

We woke to a light dusting of 2 inches of snow. The groundhog did not see his shadow this morning so it was the first day of spring at Big Sky. The temperature warmed up over the first day and the skiing in the afternoon on the Big Sky side was spring like in the afternoon after the sun had come out. Paul T and Rick H went over to the Spanish Peaks area which is the old Yellowstone Club to look at 10,000 sq ft houses. Jonas was seen getting on the Lone Tree quad while muttering " I can't stand groomed runs". Karen H had recovered from the flu and arrived in Big Sky on the 3:00pm stagecoach from Bozeman. After skiing it was back to Condo B5 for a little HH with cheese and crackers, pork sliders and assorted beverages.

Saturday February 3

We woke to a light dusting of 2 inches of snow. 13 hardy souls were up before dawn and were picked up at the condos for a day trip into Yellowstone. Steve S. signed on to take Shirley's spot so we had a full vehicle. Rich P. who was battling a sinus issue and hadn't skied yet made the trip despite not being 100%. Sally was worried about the windows fogging up but that wasn't an issue. Dick T was spotted

taking pictures of bison and elk using a camera that uses something called film. Gary H was seen taking pictures of Rick H petting a buffalo. The group traveled 69 miles in the park on a snow coach with skis in front and tracks on the rear drive axle. The group made many stops along the way to view mud pots, geysers, wildlife, rivers and Garrett eating a huge sandwich. At noon we were dropped off at Old Faithful where the visitor center was open (the government wasn't shut down that day) where we could watch some short movies and wait for Old Faithful to erupt. It was scheduled to go off at 12:37 and at 12:36 it began its show. After leaving upper geyser basin we made our way back West Yellowstone where a van and a Suburban were waiting to take us back to Moonlight.

Sunday February 4

We woke to a light dusting of 2 inches of snow. This day we actually saw other people on the mountain. We even had a couple minute wait at the bottom of Six Shooter in the afternoon. We skied and we skied all day long. Dick L. Glen C. Herb B. and Ken G. were spotted on the Six Shooter. At 4:30 everyone returned to condo B5 and we turned on a sporting event being held in downtown Minneapolis. We enjoyed cheese, crackers and meatballs left over from the pretrip. After the pretrip the leftover meatballs were hermetically sealed, frozen and transported to Big Sky in my ski bag along with an assortment of pork tenderloins, ham, turkey sausage and chicken jerky. Thank you Delta!!! At 5:15 the spinach salads and pizzas arrived. Everyone who ate their salad thought it was good and the pizza was also delicious. It's amazing what a day on the slopes can do for the appetite. After halftime people started filtering out but the 10 or so that stayed for the entire game were on the edges of their seats right up to the end.

Monday February 5

We woke to a light dusting of 3 to 4 inches. Our last day, let's make the most of it. It's Monday in Montana in the middle of nowhere. It took 3 runs before we saw a total of a dozen other skiers. Steve S. Garrett M. Felix L., Gary, Mike and Sally skied the south face. Steve didn't show at the bottom. Felix was concerned so he had the ski patrol do a sweep of the glade. Turned out Steve was safe and sound back at his condo. After skiing we descended on condo J3 where we had leftovers that everyone brought. We had enough left over food to feed 3/4 of Zimbabwe and Garrett.

Tuesday February 6

We woke to another light dusting. I had told everyone to have their bags out at 8:30 and that we would load the bus at 10:00. At 9:30 the bags were still there and we hadn't seen a black Suburban. My phone was ringing constantly. Did they forget about us was the question. Relax I said, things are going to start happening fast. And they did, by 10:15 we were all loaded and were backing away from the Summit Hotel. We arrived at the airport in plenty of time to catch our flight back to Minneapolis. No injuries on this trip and that's a good thing.

Rick Heine and Felix Lin Trip Leaders

Trip Report Italy 2018

Highlights from the Paganella, Italy trip:

- Sat/Sun Travel from MSP to final destination – smooth, easy, uneventful – other than being a long day, it was perfect in every way. It was a delight to discover a yoga studio on our flight even, thanks to Milla and Rick ☺. The bus trip was mostly uneventful though it was determined that Char would not be sitting in the front seat ever again during the week going up or down the mountain on the hairpin curved roads, even with ear buds, eye masks & calming drugs! After settling in, most everyone headed a few steps across the small parking lot to the Rent-n-Go to get the proper equipment for our first day on Paganella. 3 brave souls decided to try the Bombers, more on that later. We all met in the dining room for our first Hotel Cristallo Italian dinner – impressive! We chose our own appetizers, salads, vegetables and breads and THEN were served our entrée and dessert. We knew we were in for a great week of dining experiences!
- Monday - Marco took a large early group straight up to the top for his mountain tour, and we heard he gave them all quite a run for their money! Turns out starting at 8:15 every day is like First Tracks every day – nightly, nicely groomed slopes made most everyone very happy ☺ Agnese started out with the later, more casual skiers at 8:30. That group kept a pretty good pace also and was able to explore one side of the mountain. Leslie and Char peeled off a bit early, discovering that sign language was quite effective in getting directions to go *under* the bridge not *over* the bridge. The tours were a great way to start our vacation. And maybe both liked skiing with our group because they kept coming back for those early morning runs with us! The après ski reception was incredible. Words don't do justice to the food, the presentation, the wine and the camaraderie. Everything was bellissimo! We've had some great hill parties on previous trips, but this one takes the prize.
- Tuesday – Another great morning of skiing, still a little foggy & damp but with a bit of new snow, and on to lunch on the hill. If we thought the HH yesterday was good, the lunch created by Gigi was amazing. Some “just-one-more-run late comers” vowed they'd be on time the rest of the week. ☺ We learned that In Italy women are always served first - love that if you're a woman! For hours we dined on a delicious 1st course of meats, cheeses and vegetables followed with freshly made pasta, bread, risotto, strudel and wine. Wow. We had a mostly private room but there were a few tables of locals. One took a shine to Cath-ar-eeeeee! And wooed her on the hill and in the commons areas the rest of the day, ah mi amori!
- Wednesday – Many club members went to Verona for a day of sightseeing, so much to see, the arena, the market, the castle, bridge and churches, Romeo and Juliet's terrace. Congratulations to Becky & Bob who got engaged on Juliet's balcony!
Ross, Mari & Gary had traded out their Bombers by this time – they're just not used to bringing up the rear and being *totally* spent at the end of the day! Easy cruising sticks were much more their style. A social gathering prior to dinner was the perfect time for the Rookies (John, Rachel, Milla, Bob, Ben & Catharine) to introduce themselves with lively musical team skits. Welcome to John Cummings from NJ - great addition to the club. Hope to see him on future trips too. After dinner many joined the fun at karaoke & dancing in the hotel lobby and moved downtown after that. Joanne, Peter, Garrett, Rachel, Gary - you guys know how to rock it!
- Thursday – a morning of beautiful blue skies and great skiing started the day. The afternoon was spent by nearly all of our people with a tour of the Mezzacorona Winery, the 3rd largest winery in Italy, very large and state of the art facility. After that we visited the Francesco Moser Winery, a small privately owned winery. Francesco Moser, world professional road bicycle racer, was on-site and a gracious host, showing us his museum filled with bicycles, trophies, jerseys and news clippings. Francesco demonstrated how to open a bottle of champagne using a sword, very impressive!

- Friday – a blue bird day for skiing & picture taking. Crystal blue skies, mild temps, no wind – beautiful. Francesco graced some of our group with the opportunity to ski with him this day. He’s still the fastest – even on the slopes. Another incredible dining experience in the evening, mid-mountain, for our gala dinner. Again, the food and its presentation was outstanding.
- Saturday – we all went on a day trip to Lake Garda, Italy’s largest lake and second most popular location in the world for windsurfing (Hawaii is number one). Our day included a boat ride with stops at two additional villages. The area is known for growing lemons, grapes, olives and kiwi. Okay, we have to address the Italian bathrooms in small towns ... did anyone use a bidet? Did you know that there are actually several YouTube videos on how to properly use a bidet?
Our last dinner at the Hotel Cristallo wrapped up with birthday cheers and celebration for Rick, Karen, Peter and Mari.
- Sunday – ‘twas an early morning transfer to the airport, breakfast bag included. An easy check-in and in-flight movies helped to pass the time on the long flight. Seventeen out of the 34 said good bye and ventured off on their own for an extended vacation.

Additional notes on interest:

The hotel bar was always a hot spot for swapping stories. Dario, our favorite bartender, called Ross - Papa Ross and made sure to let us know when his girlfriend would be in town so he could get Papa’s and all of our approval!

Although, we didn't get too many pictures the mandatory robes made for interesting conversation in the hot tub and pool.

Some went out in the evenings and enjoyed dinner at a local establishment. Dancing was had by some in center city. It was super easy to get anywhere in town within a few minutes so shopping (groceries, liquor, souvenirs, gifts) was quick and easy. This area of the Dolomites is pretty famous for chocolates, honey and grappa (just ask Tim & Ross about that). While shopping at a local store Lorrie was told she "looked like she came from another land". Blonde hair, blue eyes, English speaking - a dead giveaway for “another land.” Our rooms were larger than average for Europe so room HHs with 8 or so attending was common.

We had virtually no injuries except for a few run-ins with glass doors. We had only one sick with a 24 hour bug, one out for a day of rest from a cold, one possibly pinched nerve requiring a trip to the farmacia for pain relievers and one injured before the trip but still going strong during the trip. We heard that holding her arms back actually was good for Shelly’s ski form!

Several were glad to be able to extend the trip a few days. You’ll have to attend the Banquet or Thirsty Thursdays to hear the full stories of our travels, including, we’re sure, a lot of missed stories from the Core Trip.

Lorrie, Leslie & Char shot down by rail to Rome for a whirlwind private tour of Rome then on to a more intense tour of the Vatican & Sistine Chapel, then on to Siena, Pisa and back to Milan by car.

Bob & Becky spent a few extra days exploring around Florence.

Rachel & Garrett spent a few extra days exploring around Venice.

Lyudmilla went on to meet friends in Budapest.

The McLean’s took the night train to Vienna and had a great time with Angela’s brother and sister-in-law.

Haven’t heard from Peter, hope he hasn’t gone missing in the Italian countryside...

Joanne, Cindy, & Jason had great experiences in Cinque Terra, later joined by the Pramann’s, hiking and wining and dining (of course!). The Pramann’s then took off for Rome and the mighty 3some also explored some more in and around Florence.

All in all, this was a trip we’ll cherish for years – thanks to everything Italian and everyone gracious.

Ciao!

Char Franey & Lorrie Larson, Trip Leaders