

A Typical Big Wild Day (though each day is a unique adventure!):

You wake up to a beautiful mountain sunrise. Coffee is on the campfire and in a few minutes the guide serves big portions of hot whole-grain cereal with dried blueberries. After breakfast we pack up our gear and hit the trail. The pace is leisurely enough for folks to look at plants and animals, listen to bird-song and simply enjoy the intense natural beauty around us. We rarely go for much more than an hour or so without a short break, and after about 3 miles we stop for our traditional mid-morning snack of trail mix and a candy or power bar. Onward. We gradually gain elevation and break out of the woods into a series of big flower-strewn subalpine meadows with snow-flecked peaks rising above. Along the way, we flush a mule deer buck and spot a moose along the meandering stream.

Around noon, we find a great lunch spot next to a stream in the shade of a spruce grove. We eat bagels, cream cheese, salmon and dried fruit, and after a relaxing post-lunch siesta, we continue up to the pass, where views of the surrounding mountain wilderness are spectacular. Atop the pass, we take a long “photo-op” break, and some members of the group take a short walk to the nearby summit just above the pass. But clouds are building, and it’s time to cover the final 3 miles to camp.

Which we do in alpine style, along an open ridge with big awesome views. We then head down into the forest to our lovely camp along a clear icy stream next to a lush meadow. The guide strings up a tarp as folks set up tents and collect firewood, stacking the wood under the tarp as cumulonimbus clouds rumble. It’s still a bit early for dinner when the sky opens up with rain, wind, thunder and lightening, but after about 20 minutes, the clouds suddenly part and the sun breaks through with great shafts of light.

Roaring fire. Dinner is a big pot of organic macaroni with lots of cheese plus fresh red bell peppers, carrots and garlic. After dinner we have cookies for desert and the guide heats up a pot of water for hot chocolate or tea or coffee. We hang the food up in a tree to keep the bears away. Red alpenglow lights up the peaks. We spot a small herd of elk on the ridge leading up to the highest summit, and we enjoy the evening ambiance of a warm fire in the cool mountain air. There’s good conversation and a good end to another fine mountain day. Before long, the Milky Way highlights an incredibly brightly star-lit night, and one by one, folks retire to their tents and warm sleeping bags to sleep deeply, and awaken to yet another fine day in the big wilds.

