

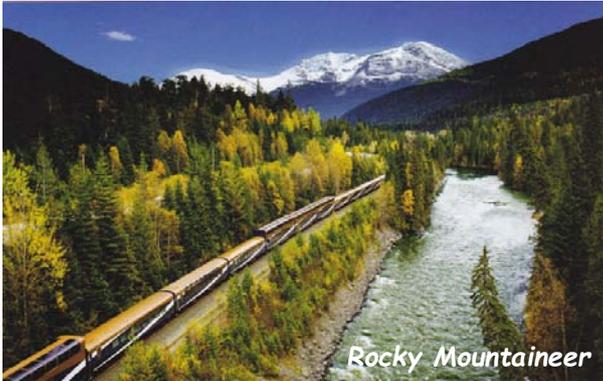
TRAVEL BLOG 2016 Part 1 - CANADA

"Let's do it!"

That was a decision taken in June 2015 while staying with Chris and Sally at their home in Buckinghamshire, England. The 'IT' in question was to holiday together the next year taking one of those trips that we had all long wanted to do.



Initial discussions - Jill, Tony, Chris & Sally



Rocky Mountaineer

It turned out to be quite complicated but centred on riding the '**Rocky Mountaineer**' [RM] hospitality/vacation train system in the Canadian Rockies. We contacted their website and received a well produced catalogue that covered a great deal more than just riding on a train. Our contact, Justine Ankiewicz was, without exception, one of the most helpful sales people I have ever encountered and with the title of '**Vacation Consultant**' no less. Always helpful, always polite and

most of all, she replied without delay - always the same day. It was remarkable given that she was in Vancouver and we live in the GMT time zone some eight hours ahead.

Quite a lot of back and forwards internet correspondence was required but eventually we all agreed to Justine's proposed '**safari**.' This required that we arranged to fly ourselves to Calgary in Alberta then RM would take over and act as our tour operator. Their part of the deal was to arrange for a two-day car hire for us to tour at our discretion, the nightly hotels and the actual two-day train journey '**First Passage to the West**' from Banff. That would take us to Vancouver where we would have a day's guided tour followed by a week on a cruise ship taking us along the Alaskan coast through the '**Inside Passage**' before depositing us again in Vancouver to do our own thing and then return home.



Nieuw Amsterdam

The detailed planning with this itinerary took a month or two and included finalising dates, which vehicle would comfortably accommodate the four of us with luggage, hotels with room type, which cruise line, travel visas for each country, costs and loading pre-paid currency cards before sterling plummeted off the radar, much of which provided an education in the navigation of exceedingly bad websites. We decided to take RM's '**Gold Leaf**' service so, finally placing a deposit, we waited for time to roll by. And my goodness, does time roll by. From that original June day it whizzed until the final payment date arrived this last July and we were really committed to go SKI-ing. [That is: Spending the Kids Inheritance.]

We have been friends with Chris and Sal for many years and have stayed with them in their home and enjoyed many short breaks at their holiday home on the Isle of Wight. Equally, they are regular and very welcome visitors to our home in Tenerife, as they used to be when we lived at Emsworth and then on Hayling Island in Hampshire. However, the likelihood of some differences over a sustained period of close proximity was a possible hazard, particularly as I know that my sometime bold statements can disturb Sally, and Chris was worried that his oft repeated anecdotes might bore us!

Saturday 10th September - Tenerife to London Gatwick

Living on a sub-tropical island, Jill and I were looking forward to a holiday with cooler temperatures and eagerly awaited the 'jump-off' day. That entailed taking Scruffy, our dog, to her holiday home at '**Poochies Pet Hotel**'. Alice and Mark who own the establishment, had originally found her abandoned

in the hills so Scruffs is quite happy to go back to stay and is looked after as part of the family. Next day, the 'progress' began. Of course, living in Tenerife makes it a little more complex than if we were in Great Missenden so our first step was a Monarch flight to Gatwick. There we stayed the night at the Hilton which was made even more seamless because our friends [and neighbours out here] Simon and Serena, had arranged for us to use their Executive Club membership and we were ushered into the Exec lounge and had a bedroom overlooking trees with glimpses of the runway.



Jill's son Toby and our daughter-in-law Ruth, trained it [bravely in view of all the rail strikes] down from London to have dinner with us - actually in the Hilton - which turned out to be not at all bad, plus giving us a few hours to catch up with them, something which has proved difficult since they set up their own hospitality and consultancy business. It is likely that Toby and I will never agree on politics for many years, if ever, so we continue to overlook each others' rabid views.... that is, his rabid views and my totally rational ones!

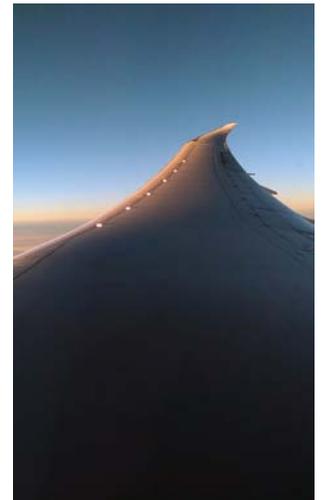


Sunday 11th - London Heathrow to Calgary, Canada

This holiday really does deserve the sub-title of 'Cars & Trains, Boats & Planes and Buses', because next day we did a first for both of us - a journey on a National Express coach between Gatwick and Heathrow airports. Just over an hour later we were at Terminal 5 having a drink while waiting for British Airways to open its baggage drop desks in an hour. Having eventually gone through security, we quite by chance bumped into Chris and Sal in Boots Chemist, all of us buying last minute necessities and then we investigated the numerous cafes to find suitable refreshment while awaiting our boarding call.

No matter how often one has done it there is always [for us] a little flutter of excitement when boarding a long-haul aircraft. By chance, British Airways have allocated the new Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner to their Calgary route and we had all booked for that BA hybrid class, '**World Traveller Plus**', a service half-way between current *Cattle Class* and *Business Class*. Actually, it reminds me of business class as it was when first introduced. It is certainly quite comfortable, offering more leg room, reclining seats and with freebie booze and meals.

[Item of absolutely useless information as told to us prior to take-off over the PA by the Captain: The diameter of each of the two engines on a Dreamliner is the same as the fuselage of the original Boeing 737 !]



I had looked forward to going on this new aircraft type and the views of the upward soaring wings in flight was awesome; but sadly, as a person who is hard to please, I was disappointed, as was Chris, by the fit-out which we both found rather shoddy; eg. a virtually new machine with bits of trim coming loose and a toilet door that didn't lock. The elderly lady sitting in the loo was not at all happy when I burst in on her. And my video screen was also faulty. Probably just penny

pinching, although they claim that this aircraft type needs less maintenance than its predecessors. Yes indeed!

Take-off from Heathrow was on schedule at 18.30, landing at Calgary, Alberta at 20.50, then through efficient Canadian immigration and customs to the first of the RM arrangements - the '**Avis**' desk. Sadly, this event confirmed my antipathy to Avis as a car hire company. The girl behind the desk could find no trace of the RM reservation. Happily another agent was able to point her in the right direction and over an hour later - yes, for a simple pre-paid reservation [with





Calgary walkway



Wire street art

no-one else waiting], we drove off in our well appointed and bash-free Dodge Caravan - a Mini-van [people carrier] that was large enough to take the four of us and our luggage in great comfort. It was dark by now and after thirty minutes or so we arrived in Calgary and found our hotel, the **Delta Calgary Downtown**, which had all the right stars, was well appointed and a great first-nighter.

Monday 12th - Calgary to Lake Louise

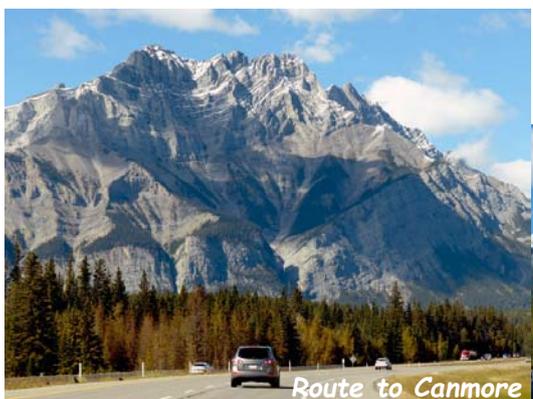
Next morning we convened for a buffet breakfast in the restaurant, for the first of many that featured far too many calories. But one does so like American-style bacon done to a crisp, with sausages and scrambled eggs and. . . etc. Then, with two touring days at our disposal, our first mission was to find an ATM for some Canadian cash so we decided to stroll through the high level walkways that Calgary boasts to avoid the winter snows. These are brilliant in that they connect high-rise buildings, each of which appeared to have a wide choice of well patronised cafes and restaurants and gave us a better overall view than from street level. Jill and I also wanted to try to get our US mobile phone re-filled but discovered that AT&T do not operate in Canada. A very helpful agent in the Rogers chain advised us that it would cost over \$60 for a new card that we only needed for one or two calls to the US. Big decision - leave US 'phone dead.



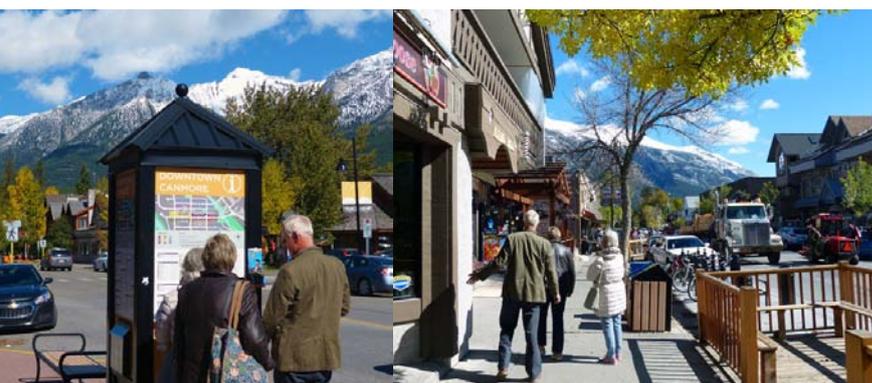
Back to the hotel to collect car and luggage and receive a detailed briefing from the friendly hotel

concierge, who punctuated his advice with a disappearing act into a small room off the lobby which was obviously filled with maps and guidebooks. A splendid fellow whose advice we followed to our advantage. Then off onto the Trans-Canada Highway, past built-up ski jumps where scenes of 'Eddie the Eagle's' attempts were televised back in 1988 and other buildings that had housed the last Canadian Winter Olympics. [Photo taken through tinted car window so not brilliant]. Chris and Sal had been here before to go ski-ing, as in 'on skis' in winter which brought back memories for them.

We drove onward towards Banff in brilliant September sunshine with vast areas of farmland at road level and snow-capped mountains in the distance, the first snows having



Route to Canmore



and a welcome beer on the roof terrace of a high street pub with friendly service from the landlord and fantastic views

fallen the week before. Following the advice of our amiable concierge, we stopped at the attractive small town of Canmore for some photo opportunities



Bow Valley Parkway

of the local mountains.

Yet again, following advice, we branched off the main highway at Banff, taking the Bow Valley Parkway, the original main route which follows the river, winding through spectacular river, forest and mountain scenery.

Then on to the **Fairmont Chateau at Lake Louise**. A hotel has been on the site since 1890, built in wood which subsequently burnt down. Now, this 550 bedroom hotel is a very large and imposing building and as we drove up to the main entrance we were guided to the kerbside by a fellow dressed in velvet breeches and a funny hat. Despite his Ruritanian dress, one hesitates to refer to him as a flunky! At this point it must be said that the courtesy and helpfulness of virtually all, no, all Canadian hospitality staff, was exceptional. This is coupled with extremely well organised operations so that not once did our luggage not arrive in our room almost



immediately, or even before us, and on every occasion they refused to take a tip. Anyway, Chris and I went to reception and the very efficient agent behind the desk told us that we had been upgraded to rooms with a partial view rather than overlooking the car park. And, as you can see, what a view!

Lake Louise is delightful and the hotel, despite its size and the number of tourist buses it gorges on each day, was first class. As long-term travellers we all felt that this had to be one of the better hotels

in our experience. Another ice-cold beer in the evening sun on the terrace was followed by a meal at one of the restaurants, actually a pub, but we sat inside as the outside temperature was dropping rapidly. I can't answer for the other three, but my roast rib of beef falls into the category of exceptional and certainly one of the best I have ever had - which probably hints at my priorities when travelling.

Tuesday 13th - Lake Louise to Banff

Needless to say that breakfast next morning



fell into the normal pattern of calories +, then off again in our mini-van. With Chris at the wheel and Sal acting as tour leader for the day, we drove through the town of Lake Louise to a large, log cabin style,

outdoor activity centre down in the valley. We parked and took the ski lifts almost to the top. Of course, no snow on our side of the valley but fantastic views of where we had been at Lake Louise and the snow-capped mountains surrounding it.



A walk to another log cabin with an interesting exhibition of wild-life [the closest we got to a bear during the two weeks] and upstairs, the ubiquitous cafe/restaurant where more [much needed]



ice-cold beer was consumed, then the ride back down the slopes with me comfortably in an enclosed car and the others braving the cold on an open seat. Brrrrr! Yet another super morning.



Having so enjoyed the route taken the day before, we decided to return the same way, especially as Jill and Chris wanted to photograph some rather nice autumnal Aspen trees noticed previously with an interesting formation of high rock known as

'Castle Mountain' in the background. We stopped at another view-point overlooking the Bow River where it meandered through a flat marshy-looking plain between the mountains. To our delight we heard the evocatively haunting sound



Castle Mountain



Canadian Pacific

of a train hooter in the distance, then the approach of large diesel engines, until just below us a Canadian Pacific freight train appeared, drawn by the three locomotives needed to pull the several hundred wagons. And to think that we would be riding on that line the next morning - thankfully not freight!

Back to the van and our night in Banff at the **Banff**



Bow Valley

Springs Hotel. Now this is another Fairmont hotel with 768 rooms and boasts 1200 staff. Near disaster here, as on reaching reception I found that I had mislaid my wallet. Best guess was that it had dropped out of my jacket pocket at the ski-resort when getting back into the vehicle. The very kind receptionist even phoned them, [amazing], to find out if the item had been handed in. Gloom and doom was building when another receptionist moseyed up and holding out the wallet said, "Mr Waring, I think this is yours." It had fallen out of my jacket pocket, but when getting out of the vehicle just outside. Relief all round as the thought of spending an evening cancelling cards and, and even worse, replacing my Spanish driving licence when we got home didn't bear thinking about. As they say.... "collapse of stout party."



The outside of the Banff hotel can be likened to a Dracula film set but the inside boasts all mod cons but in a somewhat heavy-handed way in the public areas. Jill and I had a fine room with a fantastic view over the lake and mountains in the near distance. As luck would have it Chris and Sal also had a fine room - overlooking a flat roof - which is normally the thrill reserved for Jill and myself when travelling.

Next step was to take the Dodge downtown to drop it off at the Avis depot at Cascade Plaza. Or try to. Not so easy. We followed the written instructions and stopped outside the given address, complete with its Avis sign overhead. But the shop was clearly not in use and appeared derelict. A kindly neighbouring shopkeeper directed the way through her shop, to stairs leading to a lower floor where the office was to be found. With new instructions for delivering the car to the garage, we circled the area and eventually, after a second visit to the office by Chris for further instructions, we found the garage behind an automatic roll-up door which had NO Avis sign on it. Made mental note never to use Avis again by choice!



It was a sun-setting golden evening by now and we went for a walk up Banff's attractive main street looking for a pub or somewhere to have our customary beer. Couldn't find anywhere so, in desperation, we

wandered into the Canadian Legion building and blagged our way to being served [I had done my National Service in the RAF back in 1955 and Chris is a licensed pilot]. It turned out to be an excellent solution as we sat on their terrace in the last of the sunlight, supping our beers and chatting with other lost souls. By now we had acquired a taste for Molson's [ice-cold] Canadian beer. A very good dinner in a noisy Italian joint followed and then we returned to the hotel in a shuttle-bus, bringing our second day to a nice end.



Wednesday 14th - Rocky Mountaineer from Banff to Kamloops

Next morning at six of the clock, with luggage left in our rooms, a group of very bleary-eyed Rocky Mountaineers waited in the dark for a coach to collect and then deliver us to the railway station. Milling crowd on the platform but the RM staff have done this before and we were led to our respective railcars with flags and red carpet to welcome us aboard. Us four were in coach #5 and we and our fellow travellers climbed up to our seats on the upper deck like excited



kids. Our carriage was relatively new [2009] and was immaculate. Seating was comfortable and more than spacious with vast windows to the side and above. Like new kids at school we listened to our two attendants who gave us the safety and food briefing and then as we were about to set off, were all served with a 'Bucks Fizz' to toast our two-day railway adventure.

Each carriage has its own kitchen and restaurant downstairs but as the restaurant can only hold half





of the upstairs passengers we would be eating in two sittings. Today the rear half would go first for breakfast and lunch while the next day it would be reversed. We were nearer the front so in the second

sitting but that didn't mean we had to wait the hour or so doing nothing. The two attendants were our tour guides, waiters, drinks servers and everything else. Both were really charming and knowledgeable Canadians who

immediately served a choice of orange juice, coffee, tea or whatever, plus a home-cooked scone while we waited for the main meal. Eventually we filed downstairs and had a table for four at which we were served a splendid full breakfast from a variety of choices and all freshly cooked by our

own kitchen team of chefs and piling on yet more calories! It was beginning to look as though the RM reputation was well earned. Correction - we freely acknowledge that throughout our visit, RM proved to be exceptionally well organised and with exceptional staff training.

As this was one of the last trips of the year [RM do not operate during winter], we learned that one of our attendants, Nigel, was looking forward to his own vacation trip. He and his girlfriend were about to embark on the rail trip of a lifetime - no less than 'The



A view from Spiral Tunnel

Trans-Siberian Express'. Brave boy!

It goes without saying that the scenery is beyond dramatic. The rail route itself is the original [single] track for the trans-Canadian Pacific. Quite how the surveyors worked their way through forests, canyons and mountains on foot with pack mules is a wonder, let alone how the navies actually built the line. They had incredible courage and foresight. Some of the trestle bridge crossings of rivers or ravines look very flimsy and have no side protection.

Leaving Banff, originally called 'Siding 29' by the railway, we retraced our previous days' car journey past the impressive Castle Mountain and Lake Louise, reaching the highest point of our journey [5,332ft] at the Rockies Continental Divide between Alberta and British Columbia. From this point the train has to descend through the Spiral Tunnels, a convoluted series of tunnels created through two mountains to cut the original 4.5% gradient to a more manageable 2.2%. Construction began in 1907 and took 1000 men 20 months to complete. The upper spiral is 3,255ft [993m] long and turns approximately 290 degrees, emerging 50ft [15.25m] lower, with the lower spiral at 2,923ft [891m] long, turning about 230 degrees and emerging another 56ft [17.1m] lower. An incredible feat of engineering which involved the excavation of 750,000 cubic yards [557,000m³] of rock. The trains, which never trundle much over 35 to 40 miles an hour, slow right down and have two powerful engines to ensure sufficient braking [or pulling] for this part of the journey. They also slow when passing over the many bridges which may be to



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give us a better view or, as the more sceptical of us think, to reduce the vibration on the vast constructions. And to think that in the first instance these structures were made of wood. The track is in fact one of the main routes from Atlantic to Pacific coasts so it carries both freight and passenger traffic although the RM does not run its hospitality/vacation trains during winter months so one has to do with the summer scenery. It must be splendid to go over the tracks in winter through several meters of snow but also be at the mercy of long delays due to track ice or avalanches.



After the tunnels the train follows the Columbia River and passengers enjoy lengthy views of it meandering through mountain passes with birds of prey such as bald-headed eagles, herons and osprey scouting for salmon. Mountain sheep, elk and bear can often be seen, with the cabin crew quick to point out anything of interest. The train driver will frequently slow down for photo opportunities. A favourite spot for photographers is the open caboose on the lower deck of each rail car, a space to stretch the legs and enjoy some of the fresh mountain air. With the salmon spawning season coming to an end we all reckoned that the bears were sufficiently replete and ready for their winter hibernation judging by the notable lack of sightings!



As we headed further south-west, we passed through yet more tunnels, avalanche protecting snowsheds and crossed the Columbia and the Illecillewaet Rivers many times over as we wound through the densely forested glacial valleys of the Columbia Mountain region.





The scenery continues to be stunning and the historical information given by our crew about the First Nation tribes who have populated these areas for thousands of years was fascinating.

Heading towards our night stop in Kamloops, we moved into the contrasting scenery of South Thompson River Valley, a lush area of farming land with enormous lakes such as Shuswap, a lake with an amazing 621 miles of shoreline and

more grassland for farming. These areas were originally populated by hunters before the arrival of the railway gradually encouraged visitors to enjoy it as a location for fishing, boating and many other water sports. In a previous era, spawning salmon were so abundant that settlers could pitchfork them out of the water to fertilize their fields. Much of the marshy south-western arm of the lake has become a Nature Enhancement Reserve and is now a protected area to 150 species of birds and



Shuswap Lake



Logging on Shuswap Lake

waterfowl. The train then crossed the Shuswap River on a trestle bridge [very slowly] allowing excellent views of the lake to one side and lush valley to the other before moving on to our Kamloops destination.

The town is situated at the junction of the North and South Thompson Rivers and was the trading centre for the

Shuswap people for thousands of years and still is. It was developed in the early 1800s by settlers who began wood mills and paper industries due to the readily available forestation and a fast flowing river. In 1812 the first fur trading post was built by the Pacific Fur Company, followed later by the arrival of the Hudson Bay Company.

We were checked into a fairly basic but comfortable business/traveller type hotel within walking distance of the station but for safety reasons were taken by coach.



Another room with a fine view for Jill and me and another view of the car park for Chris and Sal. Nothing to do with us boss, really! A stroll down to the river confirmed that Kamloops is yet another 'fresh-as-a-daisy' Canadian town. Spotless and well organised with nice riverside walks and an abundance of colourful flowerbeds. We wandered through the rather sterile downtown area and found a sort of pub/



Evening at Kamloops



restaurant, saved for me at least, by being served real old fashioned fish and chips. Great! Can't remember what the others had.

Thursday 15th - Rocky Mountaineer Kamloops to Vancouver

Another crack-of-dawn bus ride to the station and back into our observation carriage



but, on day two, we were first sitting for breakfast. Nothing to say really other than that it was as good as the first morning, as was lunch later in the day. In fact it is worth saying - given that the kitchen [or galley] is at one end of the carriage and that they cook everything fresh for each meal, the food and choice of, was exceptional. Never too little and never too much, the menu gave us a choice of three or four alternatives for each course and never did one end the meal feeling either bloated or hungry. As with all things RM, the food was very well managed, beautifully presented and with an unlimited source of drinks both in the dining room and observation car all day long - in fact Jill and I give it an exceptional rating.

We were out of the high Rockies by now, following the Thompson River and gradually descending through rocky plateaux with arid terrain and sparsely populated by trees compared to the dense forestation we had previously journeyed through. This area has wider valleys, wider rivers and even more enormously large lakes, creating a vastness of landscape that was truly breathtaking.

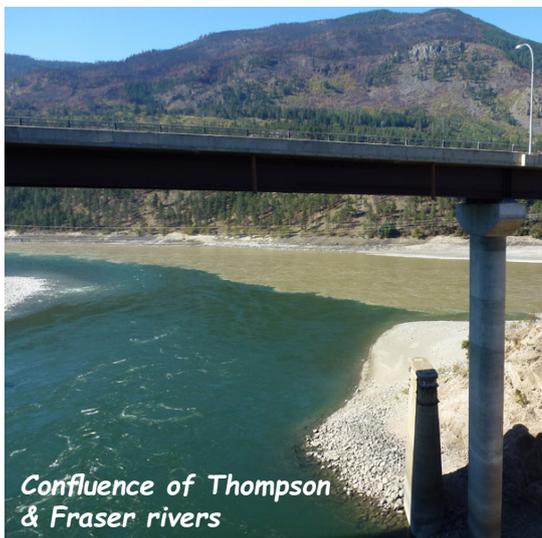


As we moved out of this arid area, we returned to rockier and more mountainous



territory once again, enjoying the sight of narrower and faster flowing rivers.

A bit further on we reached an area where large amounts of coloured rock were visible, named 'Rainbow Canyon', because the mineral-filled rocks reflect so many different colours, many of which are used by the indigenous tribes for ceremonial purposes.



Confluence of Thompson & Fraser rivers



Some five miles further is Lytton, where the crystal clear Thompson River that we had been following for so long, meets the fast moving and silt-ridden Fraser River, to continue onwards as a muddy but exceedingly fast flowing mass until it reaches Hell's Gate where the banks narrow to a 110ft gorge and the water thunders through when the mountain snows start to melt in the spring. [Not visible from train.]



We now crossed into Cascade Mountain country, a range that goes all the way down through Washington State and into Oregon. This area was once primarily involved in fur trading but is now heavily engaged in logging, evidence of which could be seen closer to Vancouver with the vast quantities of wood being transported by train, stored at the waterside or being floated down river.

We finally reached flatter countryside on the



outskirts of Vancouver where we ended up in Rocky Mountaineer's own sidings and head office. The crew were helpful and charming to the end, handing our signed postcards to each couple as a memento of our journey - it felt quite sad to leave after such a memorable trip.

Another coach ride and we were right in the middle of downtown Vancouver and de-bussed into the **Sheraton Wall Hotel** for two nights. This is a twin-tower hotel and Jill and I had been allocated a room on floor 27 of the [new] North Tower while Chris and Sally had their room on the 17th floor of the old one. All I can say about our room was that it had the biggest TV screen I've ever seen on one wall and the outer curved wall had ceiling to floor windows which were quite vertigo inducing. After a day on the RM with high calories to match, we wandered down the street and ended up in a sort of



Cafe/cake/sandwich shop. For UK readers it was a sort of Greggs with tables and chairs. We all had a generous sized sandwich which was splendid - and more than enuf!

Friday 16th - Vancouver

Next morning we met for our breakfast calorie-fest before being collected by a bright green [Greyhound] bus for our day's tour as part of the '**RM Experience**'. This was not to be our final vehicle as our driver for the day was collecting other RM's from other hotels. We met up with Mike, [new driver and tour-guide], who introduced himself as coming from Toronto. His technique was then to ask everyone else where they came from. When we said Tenerife he did a double-take as we were his first passengers from there. Impressively, he not only spoke five languages, but also managed to remember where each couple came from throughout the day. Thankfully he was only permitted to translate into four languages to save on endless translations otherwise we might have needed two days for the tour! Full marks to him though and for making it such a pleasurable tour.

Mike decided to drive us up to **Grouse Mountain** first as he believed rain would move in later on, so up we went in yet another cable car, this time to see an impressive demonstration by lumber jacks which was worth the trip on its own. The park also boasted a large number of chainsaw wood carvings, obviously done by highly skilled craftsmen.



Unfortunately, the two brown bears supposedly on display in

a fenced enclosure had decided that their hibernation period was fast approaching and were not only sound asleep but also very well camouflaged in the dappled shade of woodland trees and leaf debris.

Lunch today was on the terrace of this mountain top and they did good hamburger and chips amongst other things.

Then down Grouse Mountain to move on to another destination, the **Capilano Suspension Bridge**, where one is invited to walk across a narrow pedestrian suspension bridge that sways and bounces over a deep 450ft/137m gorge. Mike was right about the rain and the crossing was made rather more unnerving by a large group of Asian school kids running backwards and forwards taking 'selfies' on their iphones. As a school outing





one doubts that they learned much but were obviously having a good time in their free 'poncho' rain protectors.

The park also sported a suspended walkway through the treetops as well as an interesting exhibition of the 'First Nations' people. We all got a bit wet but great ice-cream was to be had in the ice-cream parlour to make up for it.

Our final stop was at a salmon breeding farm. As it was late in the season - not a lot to report other than a lot of little salmon that you may



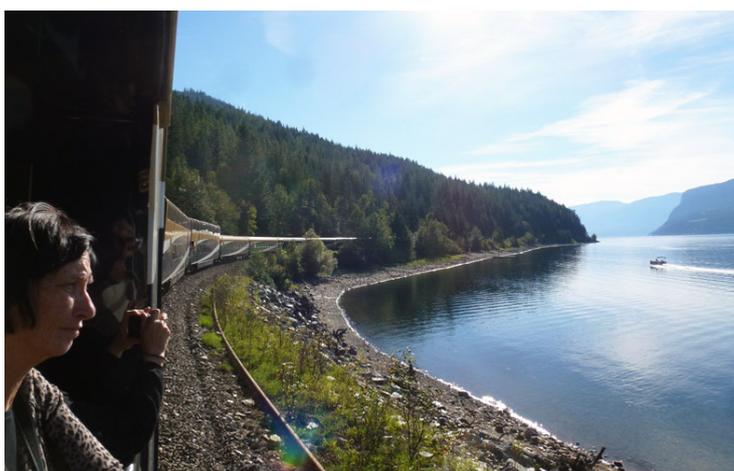
find on your plate in a few years' time and a handsome heron waiting in the wings for his evening meal!

We asked Mike to recommend somewhere good for dinner and he suggested a Greek place near our hotel where they did especially good lamb joints. We took him at his word and strolled a few blocks to a very gay part of town - vibrant and great fun. And that was the end of the official Canadian segment of our holiday.

Distance travelled by train from Banff to Vancouver - 594 miles/957 km.

CONCLUSIONS

- We got through this first week in close proximity without Sally taking umbrage at me and without Chris boring us. Check
- We all enjoyed the experience and are talking about maybe repeating the exercise at some future date. Check
- We are in agreement that Rocky Mountaineer is a superb and efficient organisation which trains its staff to a very high degree. Check
- Would Jill and I do another trip with them? Yes, in a heartbeat. Jill tells me that next time we should take a few days driving from Calgary up through the Rockies to Mount Robson, the highest peak in the Canadian Rockies at 12,972ft/3,954m, viewing the lakes and icefields on the way and joining the train at Jasper. Preferably in late spring. The choice then would be Jasper to Vancouver via Whistler at 637 miles [1153km] or Jasper to Vancouver via Kamloops and retracing part of the journey already done at 559 miles [901km]. Neither cheap but probably good value. Much depends on travel insurance for 80+.
- We were amazed at the number of people from the Orient in Canada and found many of them to be crass and rude. One had always thought of them as being polite people. Not our experience as they pushed and shoved their way to the front of a queue. Check



- We all decided that we liked Molson's Canadian Beer. Check
- Good food is an essential element in a holiday. We succeeded in this. Check
- We like Canada. Decent people, friendly, efficient and well organised. Check
- Hope you will join us for the second half of our two week holiday on the Alaskan cruise.