



Our trip to Canada in 2003 was planned to end in Toronto for an international biochemistry conference, but the conference was cancelled when SARS struck. We had put so much into planning our 5 weeks away that we decided to go ahead with the holiday regardless.

We flew to Vancouver where we spent a few days exploring, including the historic gaslight area and a trip up Grouse Mountain just on the outskirts of the city.



It was midsummer but only 4 degrees and misty on the top of Grouse mountain. We were wearing every layer we brought with us, but it was barely enough. Despite this we enjoyed the ride up through the clouds to the top where we saw deer, a bear and wonderful wood carvings.

The bears are fenced in during the summer, but in winter they hibernate in huts completely covered by snow while skiers glide unknowingly on the snow that covers them.

This was an early experience of booking hotels via the internet and we arrived to find the hotel was in a less than savoury area with hookers and junkies in the back streets. Fortunately the hotel itself was fine and being summer it was still light when we arrived back at the hotel after dinner.

The hotel had a great view of the bay where we watching endless cruise liners sail for Alaska along the beautiful Canadian coast. We hoped that one day we would be able to make this trip but it took until 2018 before that happened.

We hired a car and caught the ferry to Vancouver Island. In the days before sat navs we had some difficulty finding our B&B in the small township of Sidney, in the south of the island. Graeme Scholes, the husband of the owner was an artist and one of his block prints hangs in Di's Study. He told us about The Group of Seven, Canadian landscape artists from the early 1900s, similar to our Heidelberg school. We visited the main art gallery on the island in the city of Victoria where we saw some of their work. The example of snow capped mountains shown here was painted by Lawren Harris.



The next on the must-see list was the Butchart Gardens. Butchart had made significant money from this limestone quarry. When it was abandoned his wife turned it into an impressive garden of world stature.

We then ferried south from Victoria across to the USA. We drove down through the Olympic Peninsula of Washington state that we later found belonged to the native Indian population. After stopping for a Mexican meal along the way we arrived in Olympia, the capital of Washington State to spend time with an old school and uni friend, Marg Tudor, and her family.



Near Seattle we visited the Boeing aircraft museum where Graham was ecstatic to discover so many iconic aircraft spanning the 20th century. Following a recommendation by Graham's cousin we took a tour of Seattle's "underground city". Seattle was originally built too low to the sea on a mud flat, so after some years it was decided the scrap the first floor of all the

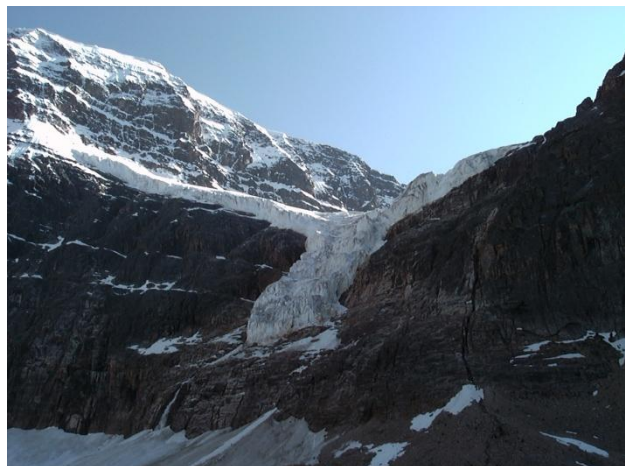
buildings and raise the roads and walkways to the first floor. Some of the lower levels are still accessible with a guide. In Tacoma, a bit south of Seattle, we went to an interesting glass-art works and got a good view of the nearby Mt Rainier. Mt Rainier (14,411 ft - 4,392 m) is a dormant volcano that dominates the area south of Seattle.



Our final trip in Washington State took us to see the devastation caused by the eruption of Mt St Helen in 1980. We then drove north, back into British Columbia, through the ski area of Whistler, although there was little snow or activity as it was midsummer. We arrived in Jasper for the Canada Day parade on July 1.



The days spent exploring the Rockies were a special highlight. Walking into Mt Edith Cavell to see our first glacier, the Angel Glacier, was exciting. And later we walked on the Columbia Icefields of the Athabasca Glacier; between Jasper and Banff. This icefield is accessed via a specially designed bus that only operates in summer. At the end of the tourist season they must empty all the water from the toilets and the pipes in the buildings so they don't freeze and burst in winter. After a brief visit to the world famous Lake Louise we bypassed Banff as we were running out of time.



Our next stop was Bragg Creek, a small village on the outskirts of Calgary where we stayed with the Blakelys, old family friends. Unknown to us we had arrived in time for a family celebration for our friends' 50th Wedding Anniversary. We all went out to a dinner and show, then partied on at an "Australian" bar complete with painting of Uluru on the wall.





Our visit was timed for us to attend the first day of the Calgary Stampede which started with a parade through the streets.

The Stampede is a massive show with carnival rides, music and, of course, lots of horse events. We particularly enjoyed the music of the duo performers "The Rodeo Riders" who are house painters for the rest of the year.

We also watched wagon races and displays of horsemanship in the main arena.



A day trip to the south of Calgary (but still in Canada) took us to a small settlement with the unlikely name of *Head-Smashed-in-Buffalo-Jump*. A fascinating museum built into the side of the hill told the story of how the local indigenous tribes worked together before each winter to herd wild buffalo to this point and then drive them over the cliff, killing them. This provided their meat and skins for the coming winter. However one day a young man got trapped in with the Buffalo and fell to his death - hence the name of the place.

From Calgary we flew to Quebec where Di found that her French was woefully inadequate to deal with the natives of Quebec. Fortunately the sheer enchantment of the old walled city was reason enough to be there. On the edge of the city we found this lovely waterfall – the Montmorency Falls. Montmorency is also the name of the suburb next to ours in Melbourne. We climbed the 487 steps to the top of the falls, noticing on the way up that although all the information panels were presented in both French and English, all the English had been vandalised. In our travels we often try to make it clear that we are Australian, not English or American, it often helps in tricky situations. Finally we crossed the St Lawrence River to visit the quaint île d'Orléans.



Next stop was Montreal, city of the 1976 Olympics. They have a wonderful Botanic Garden with a diverse range for plants including a large herb garden, a number of Bonsai plants and a wonderful raked Japanese garden.

Following the St Lawrence River we drove past the “Thousand Islands” which is actually over 1,800 islands. Many of them with magnificent houses, some holiday houses, but many were permanent residences. The islands are small so people kept their car on the mainland and had small boats to access their houses.

Kingston Ontario marks the end of the river and the start of the great lakes. Here we visited Fort Henry and learned more about the War of 1812 a conflict fought between Great Britain (Canada being a British colony at the time) and the United States of America. The US declared war on Canada, while England was distracted by the Napoleonic wars, thinking it would be easy to annexe their neighbour. They got that very wrong and ultimately Canadians sacked the White House in Washington. The war of 1812 was mostly fought as skirmishes around the Great Lakes. Fort Henry was built to stop the US invaders and it is now a museum. College students work or volunteer there during their holidays, when they re-enact the period.



Also in Kingston we visited the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes which includes this



icebreaker, Alexander Henry, which is available for accommodation when the museum closes. We chose to stay overnight in the captains' cabin, but it was still very basic.

From Kingston we took a ferry across to Wolfe Island and then another ferry into New York State. It was obvious that we were back in the USA as the houses were grander, many with porches decorated with Corinthian columns and large “Stars and Stripes.”

Situated at the mid point of the river joining Lake Eerie to Lake Ontario, Niagara Falls is made of three impressive falls – the American falls, Bridal falls and Horseshoe Falls. We did all the touristy things like travel into the spray on the Maid of the Mist and walk out onto the lookout where this photo was taken. We also spent time exploring the area leading up to the falls where little bridges allowed us to walk between the islands at the top of the falls.



Below the falls there is a massive hydroelectric power station which we visited before heading further north to Lake Ontario where we encountered the wine producing area and town of Niagara on the Lake. A really pretty town that reminded me of the Lakes district in UK.

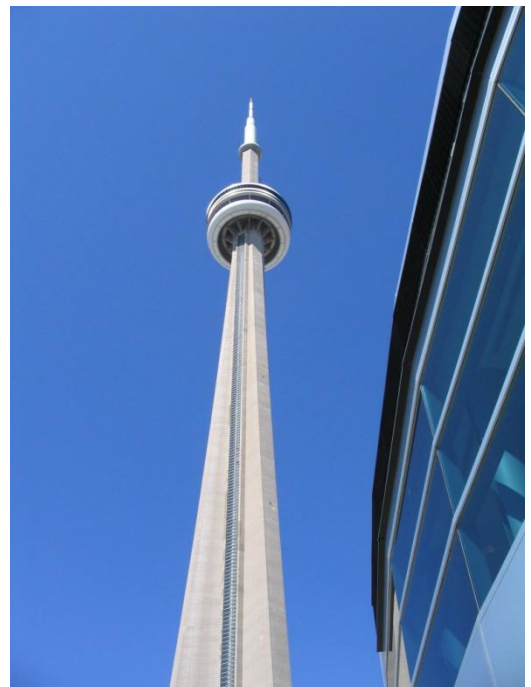


Heading west we came to the Welland Canal, built to allow large vessels to bypass the Niagara falls and sail via a series of 8 locks between Lake Ontario and Lake Erie and onto Detroit. The ships are made the maximum size possible, allowing only a few inches between the sides of the ship and the lock. It is very impressive. What is not immediately evident is

that although Niagara falls look amazing, much of the water is diverted into the Welland Canal and the hydro scheme; significantly reducing the amount of water that goes over the falls.

Next stop was Toronto which is a big city much like Melbourne. One of its highlights is the CN tower, which would normally have long queues of visitors, but because of SARS there was no line and we quickly rose to see the impressive view from the top.

Heading west again we flew to Saskatoon (Saskatchewan State) where we spent a wonderful time being hosted by our friends Frank and Lena Vella (Frank was a work colleague of Graham's). Saskatoon is a small university town, set in the middle of the prairies where the main occupations are agriculture and oil. We stayed in the impressive hotel in the photo, with a view of the river.



Flying back to Vancouver gave us a bird's eye view of the snow-capped Rockies. It was breathtaking. It was a remarkable trip made even more memorable by the hospitality of many lovely people.