

**Day 1, June 26, 2017**

Dawson Creek, BC

Headed out at 10:00 am for the Milepost 0 sign for photos and to meet our walking tour guide. Got numerous individual photos as well as a caravan group photo, thanks to a very patient, willing woman there. Caitlyn, our walking tour guide took us around several blocks of Dawson Creek downtown. Many of the buildings have murals on them which she showed us and described for us. Several of the murals were 3D in nature, having plywood cut-outs painted as part of the scene or plywood squares holding the paintings. We got another group photo at the Milepost 0 in the middle of the intersection by the Alaska Highway building. We then went through the displays of the Alaska Highway building and watched the movie describing the building of the highway from several of the army engineers' perspectives. What an amazing feat!

Everyone had lunch on their own. After lunch we met at the army tent next to the Dawson Creek Visitor Centre for more information on the building of the highway. We then perused the Visitor Centre and the neighboring art gallery gift shop and headed back to the campground. SDA group drove out to the Kiskatinaw bridge to walk along it and take pictures. Reconvened at 5:30 to head for dinner at the Rockwell Pub. Most had halibut (specially ordered for us); then apple crisp à la mode for dessert.

Great first day. Tomorrow we're off for Fort Nelson.

**Day 2, June 27, 2017**

Dawson Creek, BC to Fort Nelson, BC

BJ3 and SDA groups headed out before 8 this morning. The Bobs group departed ~ 9am. SDA group traveled to the Kiskatinaw bridge and drove across it, stopping to get photos on the far side around the curve. Our next stop was at Shepherd Inn for "good driver" treats. Not a bakery, but the convenience store had numerous home baked goodies that were really tasty. Dave and Sue went for the butter tarts. The day was rainy, off and on and the road was mostly good with some bumpy stretches.

The SDA group stopped for lunch and gas at Pink Mountain. The Bobs group was already there. Made a brief pit stop around Mile 260 where we saw a black bear grazing. Got to Fort Nelson ~ 4:00, got gas then went back to Ye Olde Quilt Shop to look at fabric. Sue got enough to make 4 pillow cases. The fabric selection they had there was amazing! Got to Triple G RV Park ~ 4:45 and checked in.

Met at Bob's coach at 5:15 to compare notes. 2 of the groups saw a bear, Jack saw a golden eagle and Bob & Brandon saw a deer. We headed to dinner at the RV park restaurant at 5:30 which was buffet style. After dinner the SDA group played a couple games of Cribbage (a prelude of many to come on this trip).

**Day 3, June 28, 2017**

Fort Nelson, BC to Muncho Lake, BC

The BJ3 group headed out around 7:30, the SDA group at about 8 this morning. The Bobs group left ~ 9. Lots of animals along the road today. SDA group saw 7 black bears, 3 caribou, 1 deer, 12 stone sheep, a

redtail hawk, a rough leg hawk, lots of barn swallows and some cedar waxwings. The BJ3 group saw some wood bison on the way up to Liard River Hot Springs.

The drive took us into mountains with winding roads, fast flowing streams and great views. The SDA group stopped first at Steamboat Mountain viewpoint, which was the beginning of the mountains. Next stop was Tetsa River Services; the cinnamon bun stop. The buns are HUGE and very tasty. We shared one among the 3 of us and each saved one for breakfast tomorrow. (Later we would decide that these are THE BEST cinnamon buns on the Alaska Highway.) Stopped at Summit Lake then went a little farther to the Erosion Pillars trail by Rocky Crest Lake. Saw a couple of redhead ducks in the lake and hiked the trail up to the erosion pillars. Had lunch at that stop and were alerted to the presence of 3 caribou walking down the highway by Xena's barking. They hung around for quite a while and we saw the Bobs group go by while we were watching the caribou. A bit farther down the road, saw several Stone sheep licking minerals along the side of the road.

Continued on to Toad River Lodge and stopped to see the hat collection. There are thousands hanging from the ceiling. Gas was \$1.69 CDN/L (~\$4.34/gal) here! Last stop was the Northern Rockies Lodge where gas was still pretty expensive.

Bob N. had arranged a campfire for 5:30 so we gathered down by the lake to enjoy the fire, the scenery and chat about our adventures for the day. The BJ3 group reported on the Liard River Hot Springs which definitely sounds worth a stop. Folks went in for dinner ~7 then most of us ended up reconvening at Jim and Jeanie's coach to chat for another hour or so. Still quite light at 10. All set for another day's adventures tomorrow.

#### **Day 4, June 29, 2017**

Muncho Lake, BC to Watson, Lake, YT

SDA headed out by 7:45 this morning, with other groups following later. Crews were seal coating and graveling a stretch of the road between Muncho Lake and Liard River Hot Springs. This required ~ a 10 minute wait for the "follow-me" car, then driving in dusty to very dusty conditions for about 15 minutes. Walked out to the hot springs from the parking lot and changed to go in. Nice buildings and decks around the hot springs. Water ranged from almost warm to REALLY HOT! It was fairly clear and you could feel the hot spots flowing by you as you stood in the pool. In parts of the pool our feet were cool but higher up was much hotter. After drying and dressing, we pressed on our way. Met the Bobs group going in as we were leaving.

SDA stopped at Coal River Lodge for a lunch of buffalo burgers. They also advertise pie and coffee for \$6. We passed on that but the burgers were really good. Down the road a ways, we stopped at Allen's Lookout. This is just a bluff overlook with great vistas and a good story of bandits robbing riverboats. Our next stop was Lucky Lake. It wasn't really open for business but there was a trail down to the river that we took. As we were heading down the trail, we met the BJ3 group coming up. It ended up being about a 2.5 mile hike but was pretty and the river was impressive. From there we got to Watson Lake and checked into the RV park. Got gas, parked, then walked over to the signpost forest. What an amazing place. Lots of signs from around the world. Jim & Jeanie guided us to the Born Free sign. The visitor's centre had a nice display of building the highway.

Met at Bob's coach to discuss the day's trip and review tomorrow's route. BJ3 group saw a porcupine and everyone saw bison and sheep. SDA group saw 16 bison, including a couple babies, 1 stone sheep, 3 bears and 2 swans. After our day's summary, folks had dinner. After dinner, most went to the Northern Lights Centre for their IMAX presentation. Off to Whitehorse tomorrow.

### **Day 5, June 30, 2017**

Watson, Lake, YT to Whitehorse, YT

SDA group was the first to head out today at ~ 8am. Lots of driving today. Drove past all the rock messages along the highway shortly after leaving Watson Lake. Most were hard to read but they were on both sides of the road and continued on for several kilometers. Saw a porcupine along the road and got some photos of it. Next stop was Nisutlin Bridge just outside of Teslin. Hiked up to the observation platform, then along the trail to the power line above the dam. Wonderful flowers along the way. BJ3 group pulled in just as we were leaving. Crossed the bridge and stopped at George Johnston Museum for lunch and possible nap. Also checked out the museum. It was small but well done and interesting; covering the life of George Johnston specifically and Teslin Tlingit life in general for the last 100 years or so. Next stop was Johnson's Crossing for cinnamon buns. Got one for breakfast tomorrow morning but also got a cookie and a turnover for munching on the road. The Bobs group was just finishing up when we got there.

Just past the Yukon River Bridge SDA stopped at the Swan Haven Interpretive Centre. It's only open in April when the tundra and trumpeter swans are migrating through but we wandered around anyway. Saw 3 adult bald eagles soaring while we were there. The Yukon River Bridge marks the start of the Yukon River at the outlet of Marsh Lake. Got to the Hi Country RV Park in Whitehorse ~4:15 but we were told our group was at the Pioneer RV Park. Headed back down the road to that park and checked in. Similar place to last night; gravel lot with hook-ups. They really pack them in here.

Had a group meeting at ~ 5 tonight. Not a lot to report. The Bobs group saw some bears and all 3 groups seemed to be traveling fairly close to each other today. Tomorrow we will head into Whitehorse to visit several of the in-town sights and enjoy some of the Canada Day celebrations.

### **Day 6, July 1, 2017** (Canada Day, which this year marked Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary)

Whitehorse, YT

BJ3 group drove down to Whitehorse at 7:00 this morning to be sure to get a parking space. Dave & Ann went down soon after on their Helix and all parked at the Yukon Visitor Centre parking lot. LOTS of room! BJ3 and Ann & Dave had breakfast at the Edgewater; most of us had the special (great deal!). After breakfast A & D walked to find the Old Log Church, which wasn't open yet. Saw several statues and informative plaques on our walk about town. Also walked by the log skyscraper. This is a 3½ story log building with what looked like an efficiency-sized apartment on each floor. The lowest level looked to be partway below ground level, thus the ½ story. Walked to the *SS Klondike* for a tour next.

The *SS Klondike* is an interesting boat as is its associated history. We were only able to go through the cargo level and the sun deck of the next level up. One would think that boats like that would be top-heavy, but with the mass of cargo they carried, it appears not to have been a problem. From here we walked back down Second St. to watch the parade. The parade lead off with a bagpipe band and a

group of Mounties in dress uniform. Lots of other local groups including large Chinese, Japanese and Filipino contingents in the parade. After the parade, joined a "tour" of the Old Log Church and got most of the history of the place. Amazing what people could and did do 150 years ago.

Walked down to the MacBride Museum. Again, an interesting place. The first building had display boards on the large-scale history of the Yukon, a display of numerous items of daily life of First Nations peoples here and a very nice display of the local animals, including information about each one. The second building had information, artifacts and specific stories of the area starting with the gold rush, or slightly before and continuing through the middle of the 1900s. From here we walked to the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre. Finally found our way out to the back where all the activity seemed to be occurring: paddle carving, 2 types of boat building, wood carving, and beading. Chatted a bit with the kayak maker, then watched one of the drum and dance groups performing.

Drove out to the Yukon Brewing Co. and sampled several of their beers but we didn't take a tour. We then headed back all the way through town, across the bridge and out to the Fishway. This is the longest fish ladder in existence and you can look down into parts of it, as well as look through glass to see the fish as they swim from one chamber to the next up the ladder. Didn't see any fish when we got there but on our way out saw a few grayling hanging out in the lowest chamber. Apparently the salmon don't get here until mid-July.

Came back to the campground and had a group meeting at 6. Folks shared where they had been, we discussed where we were likely to go tomorrow. Later in the evening Jim & Jeanie taught several of us a new game -- Rummikub. Ended up playing until ~10:00.

## **Day 7, July 2, 2017**

Whitehorse, YT

Took the Helix to Beringia Museum this morning. We were the first ones there. Small space but very nice setup. Watched 2 of their movies and explored both inside and outside the museum. Lots of great information on the giant mammals of Beringia, the geological and ecological history of the region and how it compares to now. Interesting tie between placer miners and archeologists in finding fossils of the Beringia mammals. Came back to the campground ~ 12:30, had lunch, loaded the Helix and drove out to the Transportation Museum. Some info about the White Pass train, the use of horses and dogs in the transport of goods and various vehicles. We were not as impressed with this place as we were with the Beringia Museum. From here we went to the Copperbelt Railway & Mining Museum. We only had a short amount of time and took the train ride around the establishment. Not very impressive. Perhaps we missed the good stuff.

Drove down to Miles Canyon Bridge. Weather wasn't great but it's impressive. Wouldn't want to take a hand-built boat through the canyon as the gold rushers did.

BJ3 group went north of Whitehorse to a nature preserve in the morning. They reported seeing lots of native animals and found it a worthwhile trip. Other groups did laundry in the morning.

We all met at Klondike Rib & Salmon BBQ at 4 for dinner. Dinner was very good and it was an interesting establishment. Came back to the campground, gassed up for tomorrow, took showers, then SDA and Brandon played several hands of cribbage. Heading off to Beaver Creek early in the morning.