

2014 Canadian Rockies Journal

June 6: Arrived Calgary at 12:30 pm, half hr late. Rented the car, VW Jetta Diesel. Left at 1:30. Drove to downtown to meet. Had a Vietnamese lunch. Headed to Banff. Arrived at Banff about 5 pm. Stopped by the Minnewanka Lake first. The lake is a man-made, largest in Banff. Checked into Aspen Lodge. Went on Bow Fall trail in town. The fall is in front of the Fairmont Spring Hotel. Hiked back and had the dinner in the best pizza place in town (Tavern Pizza on Bear Street).

June 7: got up at 7, had the free breakfast (pretty good one, hot). Drove back to Bow bridge to take some pictures. Headed to Tunnel Mt and took a short hike to Hoodoos. This hike has view of the Banff Valley. Drove back to gondola. Took the gondola to the top of the Sulfer Mt. There was a 0.6 km boardwalk to an old weather station. There you can have the 360 deg view of the Banff valley and surrounding mountains. View was spectacular! Came down and headed to Jasper. On the way, took the Johnston Canyon by pass. On the way, we saw Elks grazing on the side of road, first sight of wild life. Stopped at Johnston Canyon. Took the lower and upper fall trail. The hike was short and easy, a very popular trail. The color of the water is kind of milky blue. The falls were great and roaring. It was a very popular trail. People came with pets. Along the drive we passed through the Icefield parkway. The view along the way was stunning. We stopped by taking pictures of a few glaciers. Arrived Jasper at 8 pm. Had dinner at Earls restaurant, food is pretty good. Checked into the Bear Hill Lodge. We lodged in a cabin. It was cozy and comfy. In the evening, we saw an Elk grazing outside of our cabin.

June 8: got up at 7:30 and had the free breakfast. The breakfast was very good. There was a cook in the kitchen to prepare fresh baked muffin and cakes. The muffin was the best I ever had. We headed to Maligne Lake. Arrived at lake 9:30 (drive is 40 min). Took the 10:00 am cruise. The cruise was wonderful. The color of lake changes along the cruise. The Lake was 9 miles long. Going toward the Warren Mt. Destination was Spirit island. Again, the scenery was great. The water color was so blue. At the Spirit Island, the boat docked and stopped for half an hour for photos. After cruise, we took the Marry Shaffer loop hike (3.2 km). Headed to Maligne canyon. Stopped at Beaver Lake first. Hiked up to the lake. Hike was 2 km. the lake was small but pretty. Arrived at Maligne Canyon at 3 pm. We started the hike. This hike was very popular and saw quite a few tour buses. The hike was on top of a slot canyon (50-60 m deep). It was spectacular! A few falls on the way, roaring. On the way back to Jasper, stopped at Edith Lake and Fairmont Park Lodge. The Edith Lake was very pretty but was late so the light was not very good. The color was not shined. Went in town. Had dinner in Evil Dave. The food was so -so but expensive. Back to hotel (8 pm early) so Ling and I had a hot tub. It finally rained that evening, started at 9 pm. We were afraid of hitting the rain before the trip. Now the rain finally came in the evening.

June 9: got up at 7:30 again. Had breakfast (again, the free, home-cooked). It was cloudy but clear day. Headed to Patricia Lake and Pyramid Lake. The view was great. Took a short hike into the island in the middle of the Pyramid Lake. Headed to Mt Robson but road was closed. So went to Valley of Five lakes. The hike was short (2 km) and easy but a great hike. The color of each lake is different. At the third lake, while casually strolled on the lake shore, Yali quietly said "there is a bear" We looked back and there

was a black bear walking toward us along the shore about 60 ft from us. Ling and Yali walked as fast as they could. The bear went into the tree just a while. We scared a little but it was exiting. I took some pictures while moving fast. After this hike, we went to Lake Beauvert. There we took a short hike (2 km) along the shore passing the golf course. The golf course was part of the Jasper Park Lodge. But it allows the public trail go through the edge of golf course. Very beautiful setting! At 1 pm, we then headed to Mt Robson and road was open. The drive was 80 km. Along the way the view was spectacular. Arrived at Mt Robson at 2:30 pm. Started the hike to Lake Kinney. On the road to the parking lot, we saw a bear on the drive way, skinny and probably hungry. The hike was 9 km round trip, 100 m in elevation gain. The river is roaring alongside. The climate is different from Jasper, a little like rain forest, bigger and taller trees. (A lot of mosquitoes along the way). If one continue to hike, one will reach Lake Barg. There you can see two hanging glacier falls. Too hard for us but definitely worth a try in later trip. The Kinney Lake was pretty. The lake has two colors, blue and teal. On the way back, we saw two bears grazing on the side of road. We got a real close-up look and a lot shot of photos. Back to town at 8 pm, ate at Earls again.

June 10: Got up at 7:30. It was another nice day. Had the breakfast. Headed towards Icefield Parkway. We decided to try 93 A, the old road. We are the only car on the road. On the way, we passed the road to Mt Edith Cavell. Unfortunately, the road to the peak was not open till June 15th. We first arrived at Athabasca Fall. The whole Athabasca River was a fall, thundering and spectacular! Drove further, we arrived at another fall, Sunwapta fall. There is two falls, Upper and Lower Sunwapta falls. The trail to the lower one is most gentle and view is just as good. On the way, the scenery was unbelievable. The clear blue sky was dotted with clouds. With that as background, the snow capped peaks and green valley, river running in the middle. We were in heaven. There are just one good view after another great one. We kept stopping at various spots. One good spot was at the weeping wall. A shear wall, a few hundred feet tall, weeping with a lot of small falls. Before arriving Icefield center, on the left side, there was a tall water fall, Stanley fall(?). Quite spectacular. Arrived at Icefield center around 12:00 pm. Got our tour tickets (\$300 for a glacier view room, 2 Icefield Adventure, 2-Skyway and 2 free breakfast) and had lunch. We took the 2:30 bus to the Athabasca Glacier. There, the big-wheeler took us on top of the Athabasca glacier. Windy there and only had 18 minutes, not enough time to take enough photos. The glacier was leveled to a flat field. Can't feel any different than on top of ice. But on the way there we saw another glacier up close, which was quite some view. Back to the center, got on a bus to Skywalk, just 10 minutes drive away from center. Before, on the walkway, we saw two kinds of goats, one beige grey and another white on the cliff. Then we walk onto the Skywalk, a circular walk way overhanging from the rock into the air, with glass deck! Designer made it kind of bouncy. So, a lot of people, Ling, included were scared to walk on top. She finally did it without looking a glimpse down. The look was pretty funny, we all got a kick out of that. Tony and I took all kinds of photos, laying on top of the glass while another shooting photos above. We all got on top it and tried to jump at the same time. The bridge wobbled a little, scared hell out of a couple of Japanese girls on the bridge. On the way back, the bus driver informed us that there is a herd of mountain goats grazing at the roadside. There were at least 5-6 of them, not too scared of people. I took a very good shot of them on the bus. Back to the center, rested a little and had our dinner at the restaurant in the center. The food was pretty good. We both had glacier view rooms. With the Sun falling, the almost full moon (June 13 was the full moon) rose from the top of the ice-

capped mountain. Moon shone on snow. It was so pretty! The moon shone on to the bed. The moon light was the brightest I ever seen.

June 11: Got up at 8. Had our included breakfast (full breakfast, a \$25 value). Headed to Lake Louise. Just a short distance south, we stopped at the Parker Ridge trail parking lot. This trail was rated number one attraction by some website. It supposed to lead to the top of a mountain, where you can see a glacier up close. But there was still snow on the way. We bravely tried to hike up. We struggled about a quarter mile and then we gave up. The trail mark was covered by snow and we spent most of the time stepped into holes that were knee deep. Kept on driving south. We have to stop at one Lake on the side of road. The name of lake was not marked, maybe Waterfowl Lake. Nevertheless, the view was so pretty. The color of lake was teal green. Next stop was Peyto Lake. On the way up to Jasper, we stopped here too. But the trail was closed due to snow cover. Now a few days later, the parking lot to Peyto lake was still closed. But we parked at Bow lake parking lot. To our delight, the trail to Peyto Lake was open and the hike was short and easy, though still snow on the ground. Just a quarter mile hike, we got to the overlook. My God! The Lake was half clear, half frozen. The color of the lake was simply UNBELIEVABLE. It was bluish teal or greenish teal, or whatever. It was so pretty! We were so glad we made this stop. Passed Bow lake, the lake was still frozen. No doubt, this was coldest spot in the valley. We stopped at Hector Lake parking lot for lunch. We found a good spot where we could park our car next to a picnic table. Next to the picnic table, 30 feet walk, there was small, pretty lake. The color was so green and water near the shore was so clear that you can see the tree trunks in the lake. As it turned out, Hector Lake was a big lake and we just saw a bay of it. A lot of photos of course! After lunch, headed to Lake Louise. First, we wanted to make Moraine detour. The parking lot was pretty big, a sign of popular spot. Disappointed to find that the water level was low (several feet below the tree line, thus making it less pretty). Still half of the lake surface was frozen. But the mountain peaks surrounding the lake were awesome. We took both the short hike near the entry, which gave an overview of the lake, and the shoreline hike. Both hikes were easy and pretty. On the way to Moraine Lake, there was a trail to Paradise meadow. It must be very good. We don't have time for it, maybe next time. Finally, we were driving to Lake Louise. Got there about 5:30 pm. Most of the tourists were gone. It was kind of late, therefore, the color of the lake was not that pretty. Nevertheless, it is still breathtaking. The Victoria Glacier hangs above the Lake Louise. So dominating, so awesome! We took some pictures but too tired to hike. Checked into Fairmont Lake Louise Hotel. Got a lake view room. The view is unbelievable! I had reserved the dinner at Fairview dining room at 7 pm to celebrate our 30th anniversary. 30 years ago, the same date, we got our marriage certificate. The dinner was pretty good and expensive of course but view was better. After dinner, we went for the shoreline hike. It was after 9 pm so got some dusk pictures.

June 12: Since we already done most of the major spots, we decided to go to another national park in the Rockies, Yoho. Got the breakfast in a bakery in Lake Louise mall. Bought the sandwich for the lunch too, pretty big sandwich, one is certainly enough for two persons. Consulted the Info center next door, got a few tips from the lady agent. First suggested spot was the spiral tunnel. If one is lucky, she said, one can see the train going through the tunnel. I was not sure what she was talking about. But, soon we found out. Saw a couple of tour bus parked in the lot and a lot of senior tourists holding camera looking

attentively at something. I thought this must be the spiral tunnel. We saw one-of-the kind engineering marvel. They built two tunnels in two levels and made "8" alignment so to increase the length and thus reduce the slope to half of before. The turn of tunnel is very sharp and short so that you can see half of train was entering the tunnel while the head of train was coming out of the tunnel. We were lucky and caught this scene on time, kind of neat. Continued downhill and soon we were in the exit to Emerald Lake. Not far into it, we parked to see the Natural Bridge. Here is another fall. The water cut the hole in the rock so the natural bridge formed. The height of fall was not great but the scenery with the mountain in the background and color of the water is super. We all were glad that we made this stop. Drove not too far, we arrived at the Lake. This must be one of the gems of the park, since there is resort here. The color of the water indeed is Emerald but maybe because we had seen too many lakes we did not go "Ahh!". There are canoes to rent and the facility is actually open. We went on the shoreline loop hike, 3 km(?). The hike was flat and easy. The lake was dotted with canoes (2 or 3) so the scenery was different and special. Since we liked the natural bridge so much we went back to have our lunch there. So, we had our picnic next the roaring fall, neat! After lunch, we continued down to another spot, Wapta fall. The trail to the fall was 3 km round trip and flat. The fall was surprise. It was probably the biggest fall we saw in term of the water volume. The whole river falls and kind like Niagara fall. Unfortunately there is a big rock in the bottom blocked the view and diverted the water. If not that, this fall might be more well-known. After this spot, drove back to Banff. Had our dinner again in the best pizza place, Tavern. We had to wait about an hour to get in. But it was worth waiting not only for the pizza but also being able to see the NBA final, Spurs playing Heats. Life is good! After dropping off Tony and Yali to their hotel (Say goodbye to them, their vacation was over and they would take bus to the airport next day), we stopped by the Banff Hot spring (close at 11 pm). The entry was pretty cheap (\$7.50 per person) and the water is surprising clear, making us wonder whether it was truly spring water. But it is very relaxing. Came out of the pool and we did see running spring water down the hill to another hotel. So we were convinced that it was spring water. By now we knew the weather for next day would be bad. So, Ling suggested that we investigate the possibility going to Waterton National park. Checked the weather and road to there, and chatted Ke on WeChat. Ke gave some good, valuable advices as usual. We decided to go to Waterton next day.

June 13: Got up and it was raining pretty badly. The rain that we feared for the whole trip finally came. So, we happily drove out of the rain. By half way to Calgary, we were out of rain. Thanks God! We took the Rte 22, a shorter route but smaller road. We took the chance but we were glad we did. We passed through the rolling hill of country side. There was just one rolling hill after another, blanketed with green grass and Aspen trees. It was early spring there so the color is that of the fresh green. The sky was dotted with puffy clouds and underneath was this wide open green field. Beautiful! After 4 hours drive, finally got to Waterton National Park at about 2:00 pm. It was very windy, so much so that we could not even stand still in front of the Prince Wales. Even that, we had to take the 4:00 pm Middle Waterton Lake cruise so we can do other things tomorrow. On the boat, the wind was not as bad. Actually, as we go further into the lake, there is almost no wind. The boat was about quarter full so we can go anywhere, upper deck or rear to take a lot of pictures. The lake is fairly long (13 mile). It was surrounded, of course, by mountains. Half of the lake is in Canada and half is in USA. Therefore, this is a first International Peace Park, meaning two counties jointly manage the park. We docked at the US check point. We were

allowed half an hour to stroll around. Without crossing the checking point, no doc will be examined. Came back and had dinner in the Bayshore Inn's (where we stayed) own restaurant. It got a pretty good view. After dinner, we had a leisure stroll. Went up the hill to Prince of Wales. When we came down, at the side of road, a bear is up on the slope of the road casually eating the grass. It was bigger than the bears we saw in Banff.

June 14: Got up at 8:00. The wind stopped but there was drizzle. We decided to take the drive to Cameron Lake. It was a 10 km drive and took us 30 minutes to the Cameron Lake. It was raining and early so there is only another car there. The light was not that good. So we left after 20 minutes there. Back to village again. Had to decide whether we want to hike up the Bear Hump, a 1.2 KM and 100 m elevation gain hike. We decided to go. It drizzled while we go up. Some of the steps were tall but manageable. Finally we got to the top. It was wonderful! It certainly worthy the climb, even it was twice the distance. We were at the top of the Hump and only two of us. We have the whole view of the three Waterton lakes and the mountain peaks, and the magnificent Prince of Wales setting on top of the hill. Clouds casually flow around peak. It was simply a scene one can die for! 10 minutes later, dark clouds moved in. We had to move. As we headed down, the rain came. We for the first time had to pull out our rain gears. Got down to the bottom and ready to go to the Red Canyon. Just as we got of the parking lot, we saw cars lining up on the shoulder of road and people were looking at something. We asked and a lady said there were three bears on the tree. There they were, three bears on the tree, enjoying their picnic. Of course, people all wanted to park there watching, taking picture. Here came the park ranger honking and force the people to move. We drove ahead and came back. There were only a couple cars there, and bears were still on the tree. We got some nice pictures and good videos. Drove on to Red Rock Canyon. It was a nice drive and we were expecting to see more wild lives but only saw one bear high on the hill having a good time there. The Red Rock Canyon was only small canyon by the Rockies standard but unique. We then took another hike into the wood to Blakson Falls. The hike was easy and nice, 2 km round trip, lead to the falls. It was impressive but we had seen so many falls so this was considered a nice hike. Now we were done the tour in Waterton and headed to Calgary. Drove up Rte 2, an interstate highway, for about 4 hours. Got to Calgary about 8 pm. Asked around to find the China town so we can eat some Chinese food. We found one called Soluxe. Food was pretty authentic. Came the first dish and it was big. Saw such a big dish, we immediately cancelled the second one since it ran out the material for our original order. After the satisfying dinner, we stroll around blocks around China town. It was a good size and right in the heart of downtown, near the Bow river. Drove to Acclaim Hotel on the north side of the Airport.

June 15: Got up and checked out. Had to fill the gas before return the car. Find the first station, but there was no Diesel and had asked around. Drove quite a distance to find one. So that made me sweat a little. Lesson learnt: fill the gas day before. But we still had some time to spare after the checking-in and security. Flew SF safely. Took the BART to Powell Street and met up Lisa. It happened to be the Father's day. So, Lisa treated me a nice Mexican dinner. Walked to Megabus station (at Caltrain Station at King & 4th). Took the 9 pm bus home. The ride was smooth and comfy. Home finally.

Accommodations:

Exchange Rate: 0.9167 US Dollar to 1 Canadian Dollar

Car rental: Costco \$330 for 9 days. VW Jetta Diesel. Total KM: 2200. 40 miles per Gallon.

June 6: Banff, Aspen Lodge, \$140 per night, Breakfast included (hot breakfast)

June 7-9: Jasper, Bear Hill Lodge, \$430 for 3 nights, Breakfast Included (Home cooked)

June 10: Columbia Icefield Center, Glacier View Inn, \$190

June 11: Lake Louise, Fairmont Lake Louise, \$420

June 12: Banff, Brewster Mountain Lodge, \$160, Continental Breakfast

June 13: Johnston Canyon Lodge, not used, \$180

June 13: Waterton Lake, Bayshore Inn, \$176

June 14: Calgary, Acclaim, \$78