

Pete's Canada Holidays – part 2

Older readers will recall: 40 years ago Pete's best friend George moved to Alberta, and 5 years ago Pete visited him to celebrate George's 60th birthday. Now George's daughters want to celebrate his retirement birthday, but, what with the credit crunch, retirement is not yet on the agenda. The celebration goes ahead anyway. They've arranged to take over the town of Canmore in the Rockies, and Pete is taking wife Joyce & son George to join in the fun. Now read on.

London on a hot sticky August evening is no great fun when lugging holiday luggage in and out of tube trains: why would anybody want to live here? Anyway, Pete gets to George's flat at last, to enjoy a shower and George's haute cuisine spaghetti and cheese. With baked beans. Makes you look forward to Canadian cooking.

Next morning - M25 to Gatwick, George driving – does he read the direction signs? Bus, coffee, newspapers, magazines, books – oh, and duty free Orcadian Whisky to take with us. Eight hours on the plane. Then a long queue for immigration: and an official who cracks jokes & thinks we should laugh. We do.

On the other hand – people coming round with complimentary bottles of water while we're in the car rental queue: wouldn't get that at home.

A Chevrolet! Wow! What is a levee? Why is the car hire clerk surprised that we'd have 3 of us in the car? We do find out - can't sit up in the back if you're over four foot 11.

George wants to drive and strides up to the right hand front door – ha – fooled you! Funny sort of controls. There doesn't seem to be a clutch. Gear stick goes straight back & forth – P N R D I II: anyway, there's plenty of instructions coming my way.

So we go back and forth (literally), then get out of the underground car park, and drive round Calgary and set off West. Big green areas, occasional animals, no stone walls, not many fences, pretty flat: all of a sudden we hit the Rockies. And it is abrupt. Courteous, cautious drivers, who keep to the speed limit. Never saw a policeman till we got back to Calgary.

Canmore! Canmore Inn & Suites! I pull up outside the reception & my passengers pile out. I can't get the key out of the ignition. Push it, pull it, hit it, bend it, watch out it's the only one we've got, what to do, pull, push, curse. Not effective. Can't start the engine either. Help!

Apparently you have to move the gear stick. Not done that for a couple of hours. Luggage out. I need to park up. Engine starts nicely. Gear stick won't move. Rattle it, push it, pull it, hit it, shout & swear. Apparently you have to put your foot on the brake. So George drives after that. Extremely restful – like having your own chauffeur 24/7. Much to be recommended. Just can't see much out of the back.

My body thinks it's 1 a.m., but for some reason it's still light and the clock says 5 p.m. So we climb Chinaman's Peak – so named because a Chinaman was dared to run up it. It's said he did just that & ran back to town. In 1890. We take a bit longer than him. As we approach the top we see big signs: getting there we read 'Forbidden to throw stones – walkers & climbers below'. In French. The initial descent from the summit is very loose rock and very steep and I'm pleased none of you lot were watching me. Especially as I'm claiming to be able to descend. Not at 3 a.m. with the sun shining, I guess. We saw marmots – I think.

Shower, bed & sleep at last. Next day we go walking again, again dramatic, starting beside a lovely babbling brook, ending up on a glacier. Very impressive. But we had not realised that we'd be driving distances on dirt roads and initially spent time worrying about stone chip damage to the car.

Followed by a couple of hours on mountain bikes: Canmore hosted the winter Olympics 20 or more years ago so there are miles (sorry kilometres) of trails to ride on. Exhilarating. And when we're back the celebrants have arrived, some we've never met before, most we haven't seen in a very long time. A good evening with plentiful food and good beer.

Memorandum – don't buy a half pint. Pricing – small beer (half pint) 3 dollars, beer (pint) 4 dollars, pitcher (enough for several) 6 dollars. Best with a pitcher. And if there's more than one of you, I guess you could try more than one pitcher.

The hotel has a swimming pool, jacuzzi, and, particularly, a water slide. Bliss.

So Saturday dawns- you can fill in the details, sit, talk, chat, picnic at the lake, big mountains looming over us, did I mention drink? Talk a bit more, eat, chat, drink, go for a swim. Pretty active really. Nice meal in the evening. Lots of photos. Speeches mercifully brief. More drink.

Sunday much the same, I guess. Walked round a lake. Swam. Did some of the other things too. And a barbecue.

Once the good byes were over at breakfast on Monday we could go and canoe. Lake or river? Scenic lake, of course. Too bad they didn't tell us the lakes were about 7 inches deep and clogged up with waterweeds. Insert paddle – produce big mound of mud – push. It made finding the return route easier, I guess. Anyway we got on to the river. That was exhilarating. Trees blown down, some collisions with immovable objects, therefore, bloody George filled the canoe with water – we laughed a lot. Then went for lunch in Banff. So by the time we set off up the mountain it was about 4 p.m. This produced an interesting emotion when – George having gone higher up the mountain, we saw him running back down the ridge, then never saw him again. He's slid off the other side. We'd seen the other side – as near vertical as makes no odds. We're miles from anywhere. And it's a time when all sensible Rockies explorers are already safely ensconced in their hotel rooms. Probably after supper. Or in the bar.

Anyway, he reappeared.

Whitewater rafting the next day. That was real

Another glacier. And fantastic waterfalls. And a train going through the spiral tunnel. Just like the photo in my geography textbook 50 years ago. And a drive along the Icefields Parkway.

Then a touristy day, Visited the museum & café at Nordegg, an abandoned coal mining town. Stayed at my friend George's overnight. On to Calgary next morning. Fort Calgary museum. Took George to the airport – we were leaving a few hours later, flight to Manchester. Relaxing end to the holiday.

Except it wasn't. The captain had swine flu or something & the flight couldn't go. Put off for ten hours till 0630. Bang went Joyce's hopes of watching Everton next day. At least they put us in a hotel. The key said the room was on the 2nd floor – no. 2016. We got the lift. Up one flight & out. Then we waited 15 minutes while full lifts flew up & down till we could get one to the 20th floor. And find our room. Quite a view. Don't get that in Tod.

Flight equally boring: £80 for the taxi back - what else can you do at Manchester Airport at 10 30 p.m.? especially when your wife goes walkies whilst you're at the carousel? Do you go through immigration, and leave her behind? Or wait, while she's fuming on the other side? At least there are no 'jokes' from the official – nobody takes notice of you walking through. Nor does Joyce take any notice of the message I have them roadcast over the Tannoy asking her to come find me.

He'll be 70 in 2014

Peter e

TODMORDEN HARRIERS JUNIORS

Meetings will be: in term time on Monday nights while Todmorden High School is open, or during summer - outside when conditions are good enough.

Future times are – in 2009 are going to be Led by Eileen Miles Level 3 Coach:

Monday 4.30pm to: 5.30pm - for 6 to 8 year olds
5:30 to 6.30pm - for 8 to 11 year olds (Mixed session)

Ben Crowther Lauren Jeska and Gareth Vickers Assisting.

Tuesdays 6.30 to 7.30pm - for 12+ including adults lead by Graham Wrench – Level 3 Coach. This session is always outside.

**Please send your child with suitable: footwear for a Gym, (Good trainers for outside work)
 A bottle of WATER, not Juice (of any sort) and**

a suitable warm jumper or top as a minimum over their running kit.

Currently the FRA (<http://www.fellrunner.org.uk/2009races.htm>) is listing all races and details of junior races and advice about racing and youngsters - can be found there.

Any Parents wishing to take part in the Club organisation please contact either Ben or Eileen.

Contact numbers: Eileen 07738 634625; Ben 07810 501959;

For parents: Criminal Record Bureau Check are carried out for all helpers and coaches, See this web site...
<http://www.crb.gov.uk/>

A new form of security check is imminent, through government statute, later this year, another hoop to jump through, but we are an athletic club so it should be fine. If you volunteer, you are technically required to have a CRB check, it is free for voluntary groups like ours, Information sheet available... It is a fuff but a legal requirement of the government under the Every Child Matters Framework.

We have lots of funding opportunities for those interested in gaining Level 1 coach status or 'Jog Leader' qualification which is an insurance requirement, and allows you to assist