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## Newsletter 08/07

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### Kanada – Yukon and British Columbia to Vancouver Island

## From Wilderness to the Big City



#### Ssssssss....

They've found us immediately. We have just arrived in this lonely campground called Prophet River Provincial Park. And they have already attacked and flown around us in their hundreds and thousands. Mosquitoes, greedy for our blood, which pulsates temptingly directly under our skin after cycling. Quickly, we put our second layer of clothing on (for we are too lazy for applying DEET in the evening). Another pair of socks, because just one pair is no hindrance for any Canadian vampire. Another pair of trousers, and that gets tucked into our socks. And of course, the mosquito hat. Tres chic! We would love to hide in our tent, but we still have to eat. And because of the bears you can't do that inside the tent (only if you like to have a nightly visitor, who thinks: "I smell some food maybe these animals inside that orange thing have some more for me?") So we move 200m away from the tent and get some more bites because we have to remove our hats for eating our bread. We eat rapidly and then have to hang our panniers with the food high up in a tree. That's what every bear consultant book recommends while travelling in bear country. That's the theory. In practice, here on the campground, grow mainly small and thin spruce trees that are not strong enough for the pannier. Somehow, and many bites later, we find an appropriate tree. Then inside the tent, there is nothing more to do, since there are no showers or toilets.

#### Our Way

We follow the Alaska Highway South and cross the mighty Yukon Territory. So far, it was the most strenuous piece of road of our whole trip. Why was that? Because there is nothing much to do so we increased our daily cycling distances significantly. Our longest trip: 152km and 8 hours in the saddle – our bums are grateful...). Far up north we meet quite a few German expatriates, who fulfil their dream of living here and mostly live off the tourists. They have all left „good old Germany“, because in their opinion it is far too regulated and too small in many perspectives. The greatest pleasure of one expatriate: To mow the lawn at one o'clock in the morning. There is no neighbour who could possibly complain about that.



Another runs a Husky Kennel and rents a few cabins. But let's talk about the highway. It is an endless grey stream, surrounded by a lot of shades of green. On top of that again and again – distant and not so distant mountains, lakes, creeks and rivers. The road is long, there are stretches with 200km of nothing inbetween



between tiny trading posts. It is mostly hilly, and we cross a lot of river valleys. To our delight we find the grades not too extreme and we have shoulders to cycle on. Most travellers up here choose other means of transportation: RV (translates to "Road Virus") and motorbikes. The Monster-RVs are driven by nice retired couples, who wave and smile friendly. On the heavy machines you normally find strong men in their fifties. We don't meet a lot of cyclists, just two Scottish guys and a German – and all are pushing hard. In British Columbia the Alaska Highway doesn't change much.



But we do encounter more wildlife: mountain goats, caribous, buffalos, deer and bears, too. Black bears, to be precise. On the one hand it is really fascinating, on the other hand quite scary to see them cross the road right in front of us. But they leave us alone. Stories about bears are being told everywhere we go and everybody has a cruel tale to scare tourists. Or do you think you really find parents who pour honey over their kid to attract the bear and get a remarkable picture of the two of them!? We cycle to Prince George, where the authors of wonderful children books – Richard and Maggee - welcome us with a nice dinner. They learn that the arrival date is our wedding anniversary and invite friends and get a cake for us – we could not have spent the day better. We leave our beloved tandem at their place and take the Greyhound Bus to Vancouver. There we would like to enjoy the nightlife (without mosquito hats).



Out here in the wild all days are very much alike: Getting up, cycling, resting, cycling, pitching the tent or getting into a motel, grabbing something to eat and drink and then going to sleep. In short: Bike, Eat, Sleep – Repeat. A lot of time to think and dream. Human contacts are rare and if we meet someone we often only exchange the itineraries. A good time to think about our relationship: Have we changed, has our relationship changed? The big picture has not – at least as far as we can tell. Even back in Frankfurt in our old lives we always liked to be together closely. It is not much difference – you have to give your partner room in a small flat or on a tandem out there. The things you like and love about your partner are possibly more significant. The effort to face the challenges of this remote highway binds together. The small “mistakes” everyone has are tolerated more easily or taken with humour, because in the end we don’t have the stresses of a normal working life. A lot of people ask us if we are not bored or cannot find anything to talk about, but that is not the case. Too many new impressions, thoughts and ideas come up day by day, so every day there is something to talk about. Julia thinks of it as a marriage, not just because you are married (or like us: you are realizing your life dream), you are not another person and happy per se. We don’t take each other for granted, but respect each other and listen carefully instead of thinking we don’t have to listen, because we already know everything and we have to ride together on one bicycle. Ok, but of course you guys want to know what really gets on our nerves....

Stefan (about Julia with utmost respect): In the morning she is impatient like hell. In the day she always needs a plan. And what is worst, she only calls me “my precious” when she is angry with me.

Julia (who would never say something bad about her beloved one): Never gets going in the morning, is slow like a snail and let’s me do the packing. Does not search for things him self, always asks me where they are.

We could continue with that list, but we like to be peaceful. We’d like to cycle another couple of years together...

### Big City Life

A lot of people mention Vancouver as one of the most beautiful cities of the world – and they are right. The metropolitan city is situated directly on the Pacific, surrounded by high mountains. The downtown area is full of green trees despite its many skyscrapers and one can reach the beach easily on foot. Stanley Park – as well in the downtown area – is a paradise for joggers and cyclists. We had a table in a restaurant that only serves dishes made out of supplies out of an area within 100miles of Vancouver. A new green trend since food normally “travels” distances of more than 2500km before it is consumed. The food does not get better by this long way and the environmental costs of transportation add up. Quite fascinating for us was the variety of the local cuisine: wild salmon from Vancouver Island, wine from the Okanagan Valley and veggies and fruits from a valley nearby. In addition we visited Stefan’s relatives in Vancouver, and we were well taken care of and did some sightseeing before we met Stefan’s parents who are visiting us for a three week campervan holiday.



### Vancouver Island

With Stefan’s parents we took a holiday from our journey and visited Vancouver Island, a Pacific Island about 600km long. The city of Victoria on the southern tip is the most English town in Canada - Pubs and Tea Houses in Victorian style everywhere. The west coast was totally different: a wild and vast coast, whales in the Pacific and record rainfall resulting in rainforest with trees up to 75m high. You could say that Vancouver Island feels like a U2 song!

### What’s next?

After coming back to Prince George we will cycle on to the National Parks Jasper and Banff in the Canadian Rocky Mountains. Stefan’s parents will accompany us in their campervan. In Calgary we have to say goodbye to them and turn South to Yellowstone National Park. There we hope to see geysers and hope that the September frost won’t hit us too hard in our tent. What’s more: We will participate in the Livestrong Challenge, a charity ride organized by Lance Armstrong’s’ foundation against cancer. We will keep you updated.

### Your friends Julia und Stefan



„Life is a journey, not a destination.“  
(Steven Tyler)

### Our Sponsor of the Month:



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