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Newsletter 10/07

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Canada and USA – From British Columbia to Wyoming

Rocky Mountain High

"Is the turtle dead or only taking a nap on the beach?" Big brown saucer eyes look at us full of expectation. Instant relief follows Julia's explanation that the turtle is alive and only hangs out at the beach on Hawaii. Where are the Bankerbikers? Back in school! In Bozeman, Montana. Time travelling. We spent one hour at Ben's class. He is the son of our great guest family - the Geoffs. We told the tales of our travels and the kids were amazing. The third graders told us a lot as well, e.g. about their German ancestors or their own travel experiences.



A lot of things have happened: First of all the three week visit of Stefan's parents. Together we travelled from Vancouver Island to the Mountain Bike Mecca of Whistler on the North Shore. Then onto Prince George and into the Rocky Mountains on one of the most amazing highways we could imagine – the Icefield Parkway from Jasper to Banff. The area is touristy, but maintains its great reputation once you have left the car parks. Snow covered mountains, shiny lakes and nice little towns. A highlight was a pack of Wapiti Elks walking over our campground at dawn – they really came close and were not bothered by us at all. We wondered why not. We had a sag wagon which we really appreciated. In Calgary our parents had to take the plane back to Germany and we on the other hand had to get south urgently. The reason were the first frosts at night.

Through prairie country we reached Waterton National Park where the biggest black bear we had seen so far nearly ran into our bicycle. He was really shocked and hid fast in the woods. Understandable, isn't it? The National Park is rather small and at the end of season quite sleepy, but we liked that the most - really a small treasure! Here we could hike at last and we went up to the Crypt Lake, a lake in the mountains, but with three hours of strictly uphill climbing. We had German company that made it a very nice day. One of the German hikers was a veterinarian and we asked him, "...if he misses something on holiday?". His answer: "No. Well, desexing a dog again, that would be nice." While we were hiking we talked and sang a lot to keep the bears away from us. We saw also no dogs – maybe they were hiding.

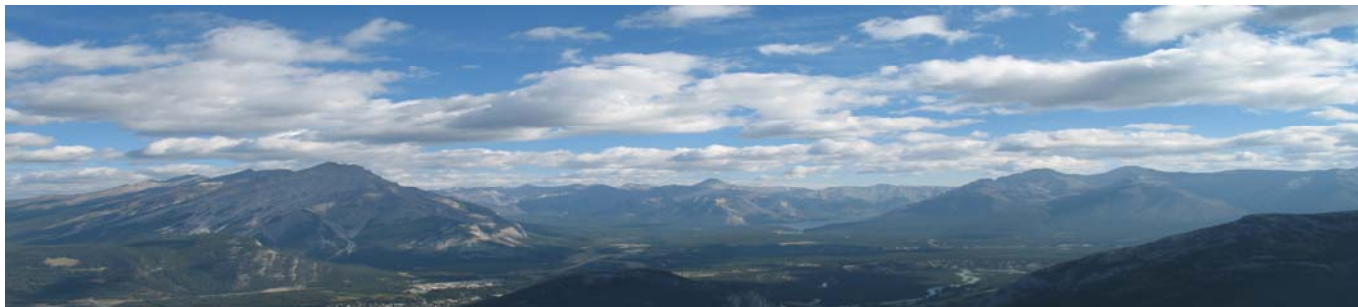
Let's go to the U.S.

At this point we wanted to get back into the U.S. Unfortunately our tandem did not see that decision the same way we did, and we got stuck right at the border because a spare part was missing. The guys working at the border then got a little bit nervous as to what they should do with us. But then a big red pick-up came passing by with its driver Sherry – our rescuer! She packed us in the back of her truck and thus brought us over the border. We spent two great days together and were sad to say goodbye to her. After that we were again lucky, the Going to the Sun Road was closed earlier this year and we just made it over and the Logan Pass on the last day. What a road, during summer it is said to be crowded but it was okay the day we travelled over it. In three hours we went up to more than 2,000 metres (6,000 feet) and then there was an endless downhill with breathtaking views. We arrived in Montana, which calls itself "Big Sky Country", and they are not wrong, - the sky is vast and spreads widely over the Cowboy Country. For movie fans, this is the state where "Brokeback Mountain" and "A River Runs Through It" were shot.



Our next highlight was the visit to the Adventure Cycling Organization in the very cycling friendly town of Missoula, Montana. The ACA was founded in the seventies, when a couple of thousand cyclists rode across the country to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the declaration of independence of the United States of America. The pictures of this ride can be found in the headquarters of the ACA, as well as the first bicycle which has been ridden over the Panamericana. The mission: "To inspire people of all ages to travel by bicycle for fitness, fun, and self-discovery". Stefan is a life member. You can find more information at: www.adventurecycling.org





We were startled by the hospitality of the people here in Montana. First Julie hosted us in Missoula, and after that we enjoyed a couple of days with the Geoff family in Bozeman. Next we were in Portland and stayed with the Pynch family. And then we had a spontaneous invitation back in Montana for lunch with Wes and his family. The weather, on the other hand, has not been hospitable. It is rather cold, together with strong winds and showers. From Bozeman we completed a side-trip to our dream city of Seattle, Washington, by car, and then drove after that to Portland, Oregon, to participate in the Livestrong challenge. We sent out a special edition of our newsletter about that event. Meanwhile we got an email from Graham Geoff and it said that it snowed in Bozeman. We were terrified, but we didn't admit it to anyone. Back in Montana we cycled at temperatures near freezing. In Gardiner, at the north entrance to the Yellowstone National Park, we finally got caught, as snow was falling and the next day some of the roads were closed. We waited for the snow to melt and the next day we entered the oldest and biggest National Park of the U.S. What an amazing landscape: huge canyons, and snow covered mountains. And we also received greetings from the world under the surface - geysers and hot springs. As if that was not enough we encountered coyotes, elk, deer and, the most amazing of all, bison, that walk majestically through the park. Seeing these Ice Age creatures eye to eye is not describable. Therefore we do not try to tell you, just look at the picture and imagine yourself standing there. Not in a car, not behind a fence, right in front of them.



The bison were peaceful, the bulls sniffed a little bit in our direction, gave some grunts and then headed on.

It took us seven hours to get to West Yellowstone and the temperature was below zero. To heat us up we could only escape into a heated restroom. But still, what an amazing day!

You could spend weeks in this Park, but we don't want to get buried in the snow so we moved south. It got a little bit warmer and we reached Jackson, a town of the wild west near Grand Teton National Park where we celebrated the 10,000th kilometre of our trip. A quick side note: the National Park is dominated by three summits, whom their French discoverer gave the name "Les Trois Tétons" which means, yes, three tits! He must have been kind of lonely...



What's next?

We are on our way to Utah where we will get the last visitors for this year. We will meet our friends Wiebke and Ralf in Moab, Utah. From there we will all go together to Las Vegas – from nature to Sin City!

After that we have two weeks left to reach Los Angeles. In the middle of November our stay in the U.S will be ended here in LA. Before we fly to Barbados - last stop for this year, we will visit Toronto and the Niagara Falls. It will be cold there, but after that we will go to the Caribbean. Our room at the beach is already secured. That thought helped us to endure the cold in Montana! In 2008 we will continue to cycle the Panamericana to Argentina. So one more newsletter will come to you this year, but for now we say

Bye, bye and see you!
Julia and Stefan



The best time in life are the small moments where you feel, you are in the right place at the right time.

(Wordly wisdom)

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