

Kate & Jim's Travels with Charles

Episode #8: The Best of Intentions lead to Squamish

When we left Earl's Cove, we had intentions. We intended to take the short drive to Sechelt and perhaps find a place to stay there. If not, we thought we might find a spot in Robert's Creek – the hometown of a couple we met in Powell River. Our hope was to spend only a little time driving, and more time enjoying the Sunshine Coast.

We parked in Sechelt and wandered around a bit, saw some of the town's sights, had lunch and decided to carry on.

We got to Robert's Creek, and drove around, trying to find a nice spot where we could park for the night. It was a lovely little town, but we had no luck.



So we pressed on to Gibsons, the last stop on the Sunshine Coast. From there, you take the ferry to Horseshoe Bay and Vancouver. Gibsons is famous for being the home of the Beachcombers TV series. We drove down the VERY steep hill (21% grade, which is a lot in an RV!) to get to Molly's Reach, the restaurant that figured prominently in the series.



We also drove around to get a sense of the town. We found a nice beach just off the main cove where some residents had a spectacular view.



We met a man on the beach with his (very cute) dog Duncan, and we asked him (the man, not Duncan) about living in Gibsons. He said it was great, partly because it was so easy to get to Vancouver. When we asked how it compared to Powell River, he said the common attitude was that Powell River was “one ferry too far.”



We had a nice little tour of Gibsons, but we still hadn't found a place where we could stay for the night. There were no vacancies in any of the few RV parks we found online. Our iOverlander app told us there were a few places we might be able to "free camp", so we followed their directions. One didn't exist, and the second took us up a winding, bumpy, dirt road that didn't seem like a good road for us to pursue further. (There are no pictures – I was too busy gripping the wheel.)

Getting a tiny bit frustrated and tired, we made our last attempt – a parking area at the edge of a forest in town. Success! Better yet, there was a Brewhouse & Distillery Pub right nearby for dinner, and a lovely café for breakfast. Perfect.



P.S. The more astute of you may notice that our front tires are not on the ground. That's okay. Our Charles has automatic levellers and sometimes that means he has to lift the front tires off the ground.



So, although we spent much more time searching for a place than enjoying the place, everything worked out just fine. The next day, we took what we think will be the last ferry ride of our journey – from Gibsons to Horseshoe Bay. As always when you ferry in BC, we got some lovely views.



(Sorry David Nairn, we didn't get any pictures of your hometown Horseshoe Bay, but for the record, it looked pretty fantastic as we drove up that steep climb and looked back at it.) We chose not to attempt driving the RV in downtown Vancouver, and hit the road toward Whistler.

Not wanting to repeat the previous day's frustration, we started using all our available information to find a spot in a campground somewhere along the way. I emailed and called a campground on the Squamish River, and the guy got back to me, saying that there was a spot available. "Come on in!" We didn't know anything about it, but we didn't care. It was right on the river and they had space for us. We were delighted with our good fortune.

The drive through the mountains was of course scenic, and we travelled, happy with the knowledge that we had a place to stay!



The road into the Squamish Valley Campground was long and dusty, and a little different, but when we got to our spot, we were pleased to be fairly close to the river.



But as we were setting up, Jim kept being distracted by the campsite across the way, where there were a number of young people obviously enjoying themselves. He said they reminded him of the 60s. They wore either skimpy or flamboyant outfits and one guy was strumming his guitar.



A little while later, we heard amplified music from somewhere up the river. I said it almost sounded like a live concert. Jim said, "If it were a live concert, we'd hear people whooping at the end of a song." Just then the song ended and we heard an audience whooping.

A young man walked by and we asked what was going on. It turned out there was an unofficial "Burn in the Forest Festival." In case you're as unaware as we were, it's a kind of variation of a Burning Man Festival (which we also didn't know much about.) It's all about being happy and feeling free to share your artistic expression and most important is their mantra: Leave No Trace. In other words, when the festival is over, nobody should know you've been there.

The young man told us we should go check it out. He assured us that it was very informal and friendly and people would welcome us and offer us a drink. We decided to check it out and walked through the forest toward the music.

What a trip! As we made our way through the forest, we came across different campsites ... that didn't seem like normal campsites.



Then we met up with groups of happy people. They were all dressed in odd, bright clothing ... or little clothing ... or no clothing. There were homemade signs, some promoting entertainers (we assumed, because we never actually saw any performances, just one guy spinning tunes). Other signs had messages that represented what they believed in or wanted us to believe in. And strewn around were all kinds of odd articles they'd brought with them – what they represented we didn't know.



As we'd been promised, everyone was very happy and welcoming. One guy (dressed in tie-dye tights, a fishnet vest and a jaunty hat) greeted us and told us there we were welcome to an open bar, edibles, and a "cuddle hut". We thanked him and moved on.







We couldn't help feeling that our general lack of planning and our decision to leave ourselves open to the moment led us to this park. And that feeling was reinforced by this particular sign:



Apparently whether we knew it or not, we were destined to be there and we are "energetically aligned with the burners." And we're okay with that. Or as one of our burner friends put it ...



We went back to Charles and had a great steak dinner. The music continued till about 1:00 am, but we had our own jazz playing in the RV, and it did a fine job of obscuring the amplified music up the river.

