

Kate & Jim's Travels with Charles

Episode #2: Our First Day On The Road

After spending the first couple of days getting used to how things work (making a lot of mistakes!) and buying essentials for our travels – like a coffee maker, toaster, chairs, table, as well as food staples, etc., we left our Salish Seaside RV park and headed north for our first real day of RV-ing.

We weren't sure where we were going to stay that night. Which was one of the things we were looking forward to in our adventure: Being open to discoveries and seizing opportunities as they appeared.

On our way out of town, we stopped to visit a friend, Daniel Reid, who showed us around his both his new homes – one mobile, one not.



He told us about an app he uses called iOverlander, which gives you locations and information about campsites all over North America. Along with national and provincial parks and commercial RV campsites, it shows you places where you can “free camp”. This is also called boondocking, wild camping or dry camping. What it basically means is that you can camp for free. That's what we were eager to find – not just for cost-saving but more for privacy and the possibility of being surrounded by natural beauty.

People inevitably suggest we can park at WalMart. But that's not exactly the view we have in mind.

We headed north and made a stop in Duncan, which sounded interesting – and was! When the town was established by English settlers, it was acknowledged that it shared a boundary with Cowichan Tribes. So, the city government and Cowichan Chief and council work together on governing issues. Now known as the City of Totems, it boasts one of the largest outdoor collections of totem poles.

The whole town is colourful and laid out in a way that made us feel quite welcome.





But as heartening as it was to wander through this town, where indigenous people and settlers seem to be living together with respect and harmony, there was the reminder that it is not the norm: If you look at the foot of the totem poles, you can see that there are candles, placed in memory of the children.

Along the highways, we kept seeing another reminder: Children's orange tee shirts suspended from the branches of trees.



Crossing the bridge outside of Port Alberni, there was this gutting memorial: Dozens of children's shoes.



And in some ways, most upsetting of all, was something we saw at the lookout point on the highway near Mill Bay, we noticed some indigenous people laying things at the base of the totem pole. When we approached it, we saw that it had been set on fire. The smell of burnt wood was still in the air.

We clearly have a long way to go.

After Duncan, we headed toward Chemainus. Along with the fact that we both knew of Chemainus as a theatre town, we had discovered through the iOverlander app that there was a spot where we could boondock/free camp/dry camp!



Chemainus is another charming town. Aside from its theatre, its claim to fame is the dozens of murals painted on the sides of buildings, depicting the town's history.









And that night, our first night “On the Road”, we found a perfectly legal, perfectly acceptable spot to park our RV (Charles), with a view of the ocean. Okay, it wasn’t the best ocean view. But, for our first night, we were pretty proud of ourselves.

