

Kate & Jim's Travels with Charles

Episode #12 – Holy Athabasca!

After leaving the Columbia, Icefields, we headed up toward Jasper. Soon we found ourselves driving beside a river, which turned out to be the Athabasca.



We had been advised by our friends Scott & Pete not to miss Athabasca Falls. There were two reasons we decided to follow their recommendation. 1. It was a waterfall. 2. It was right by the highway, so required no significant hike.

But we had no idea what was in store. As many of you know, we try to see as many waterfalls as we can (as long as the walk is “reasonable”). But along with being an impressive waterfall, the walkway that’s designed to help visitors experience the falls is brilliant. It’s cleverly laid out, allowing you to approach the falls, almost the way the river does. So, you don’t really know what’s coming, and there’s an anticipation set up. There are plaques that tell the story of the river and the science, but rather than being dry and full of statistics, they’re written with drama and imagination.

The way you approach the falls reveals it in different ways, with each turn creating more drama and adding to the experience.

Jim shot lots of footage of the falls and will be posting one of his waterfall videos, which will give you a real sense of its thundering power.

But here are my still photos, trying to capture the experience.



As you walk along the walkway toward the falls, you see that the river is turning, and you begin to see some white water.



When you approach the viewing area, you see the water starting to bump against some rocks.



Rounding the bend, you see the drop begin.



And then you discover there's more...



And more....

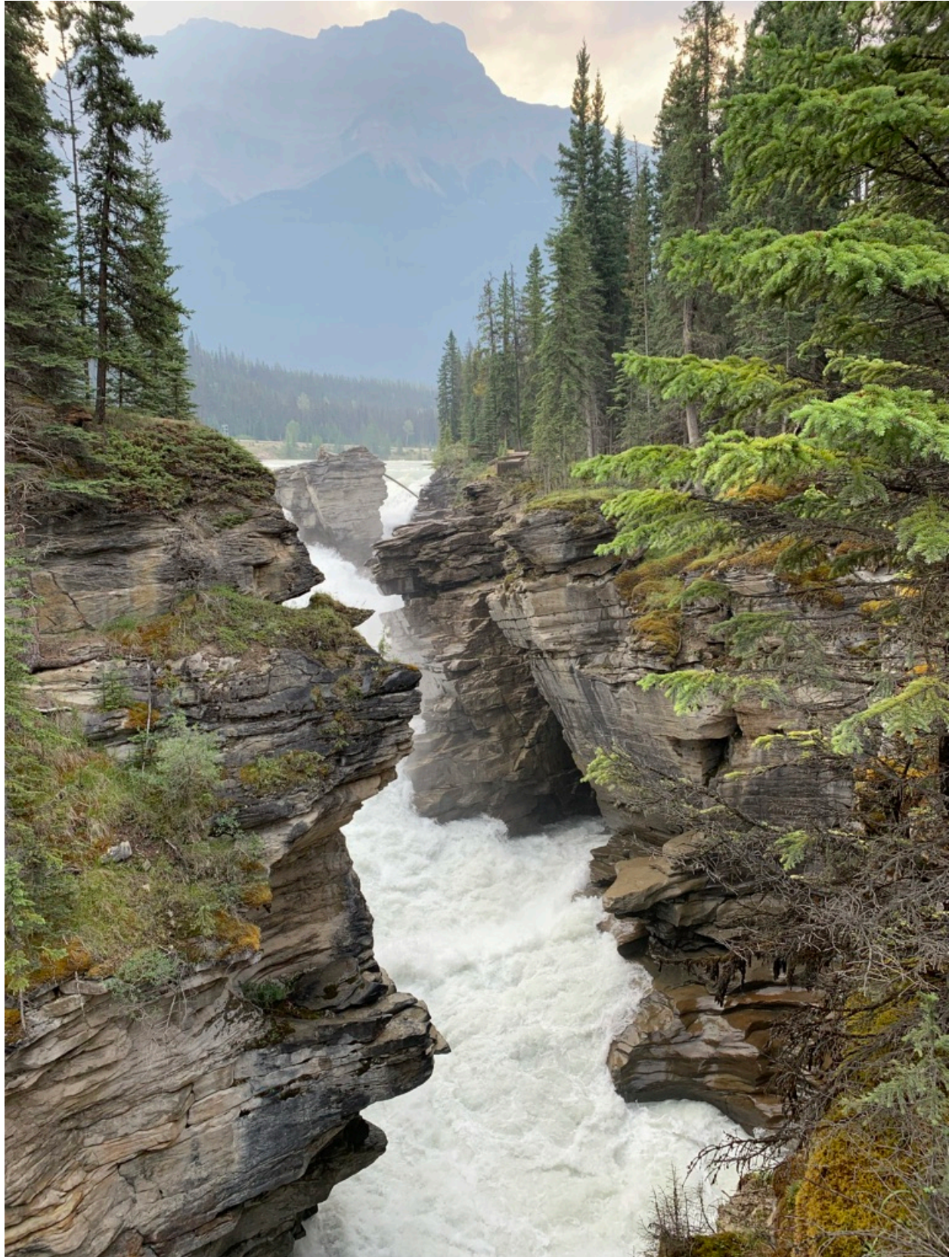


And suddenly, at the next turn, you realize that what seemed to be pleasant little steps of water are actually leading to a tremendous tumbling waterfall.



Continue around the bend and you discover the ways the water is cutting through the rocks.







And then when you get to the other side of the river, you get a totally different perspective and you feel of the tremendous power of the water.





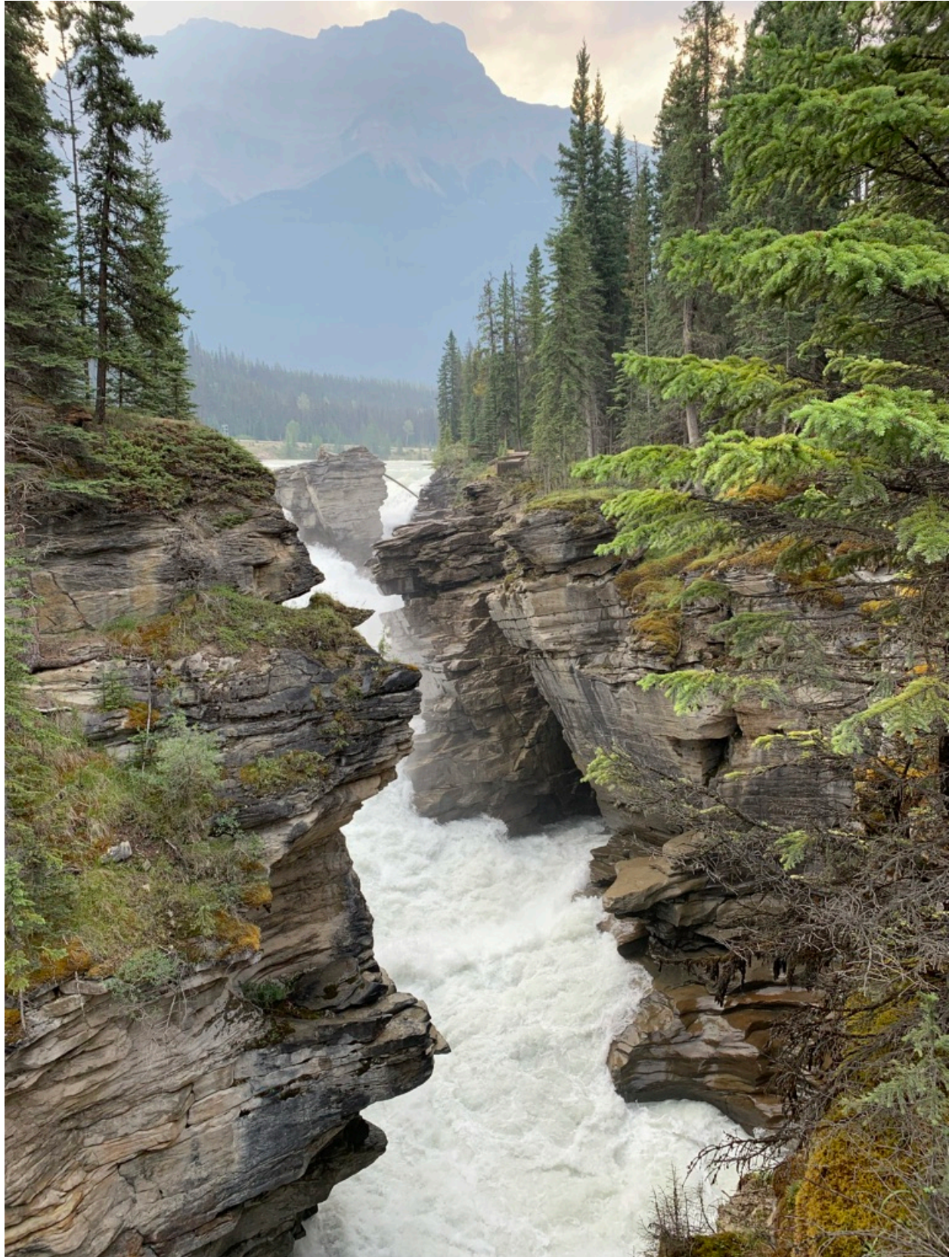




But that's only part of the story. As you follow another route back, you get to see where the water is going...





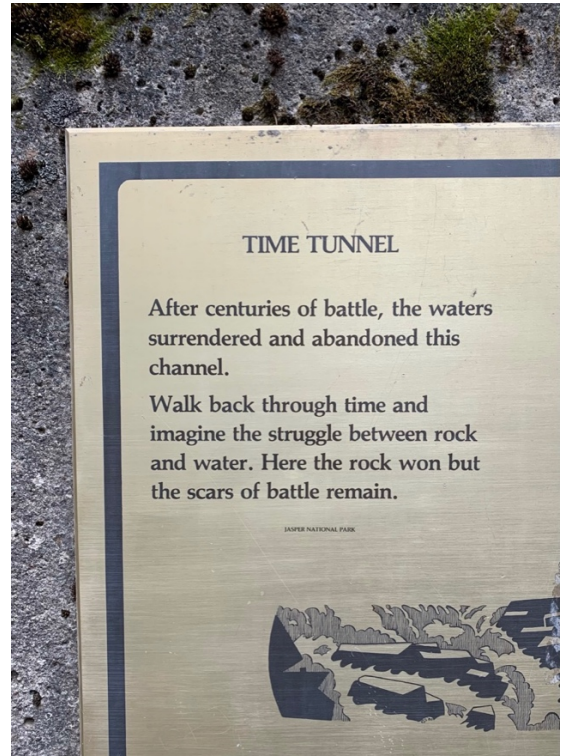




And on it goes, twisting and tumbling for over 1200 kms before emptying into Lake Athabasca. But even that isn't the end of the story at this site.



In one of the most thrilling revelations, they show you where the water ***used*** to go. And we got to follow that path, which had been carved by the water over centuries. Fantastic!







It was truly one of the best laid out tourist destinations I've seen. And as you can imagine, there were two very happy waterfall chasers.

