

Kate & Jim's Travels with Charles

Episode #20 – Picking Up Where We Left Off

When I last wrote about the good times, in those days when I could stand on my own two feet, we had just left Head Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, where I wrote about the buffalos going over the edge. (Ironic, huh?)

From that iconic place, we drove to another waterfall we'd read about. Lundbreck Falls was a great spot, and very popular with locals who splashed and tubed and fished in the water.





Of course, Jim got some more footage for an upcoming waterfall video.



But my favourite moments came from watching these ducks (I believe they're Mergansers?). I'll post two videos of them at the end of this blog. One video shows them swimming in a group and diving underwater to look for fish, which is quite amusing, in a kind of balletic way. In the second video, one of the ducks comes up with a fish in its beak! And the food fight that happens as a result is hilarious!



After Lundbreck Falls, we were back on the road again. Interesting (and encouraging) to see wind turbines in Alberta.



Clearly, we were in Alberta cowboy country. We didn't see many actual cowboys, just these metal silhouettes. Lots of them. Somebody's making a killing with these things!



But as we travelled south, we saw evidence that cowboy country was turning back into mountain country.



And finally, we got to our destination: Waterton National Park. Wow!



It had been recommended by our friends John and Glen in Edmonton, and once again they were so right. We had decided to book three nights and we were tempted to stay even longer!



It was a really nice campground to stay in, but it was also within walking distance of a great, busy little town with lots of restaurants and shops, which we took advantage of.



And there were hiking trails and two waterfalls that even we could hike to ... sort of.

Although it was quite hazy the entire time, due to fires in BC we assumed, the views were great, and being right on the lake was lovely.



And we had helpful residents to give us advice on how to set up. These guys were everywhere, and not only brash but vocal.



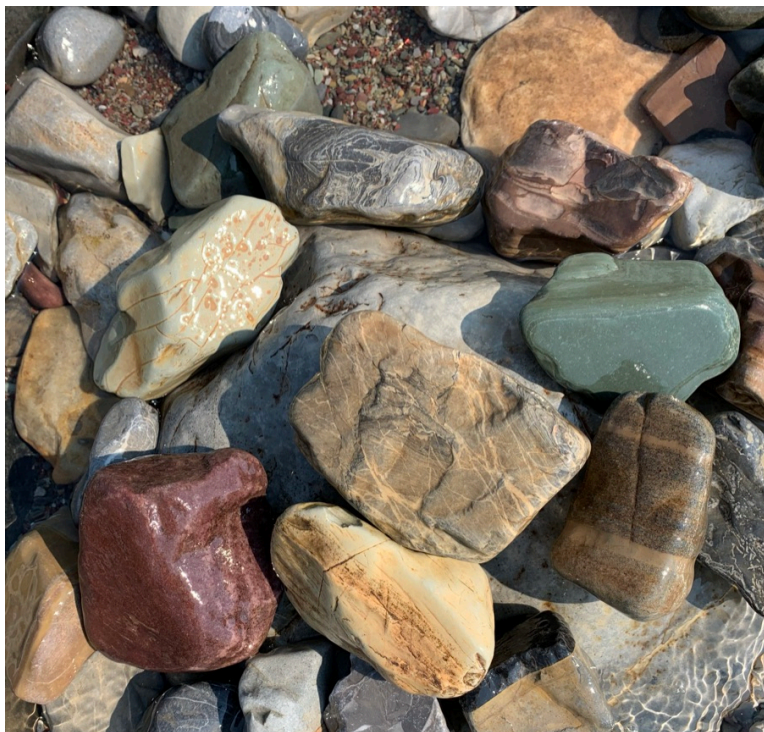
We saw other interesting residents in town, making themselves quite comfortable.



The beach was all stones, which looked fairly pale and uninteresting from a distance. But when I walked in the water and looked down, I was amazed at all the different colours and shapes. They looked like candies.



I couldn't help wondering, with all their odd markings and scratches, what stories they could tell.



We took our first hike the morning after we arrived, to Cameron Falls, which was an easy walk, and such an interesting waterfall, with its odd angles.



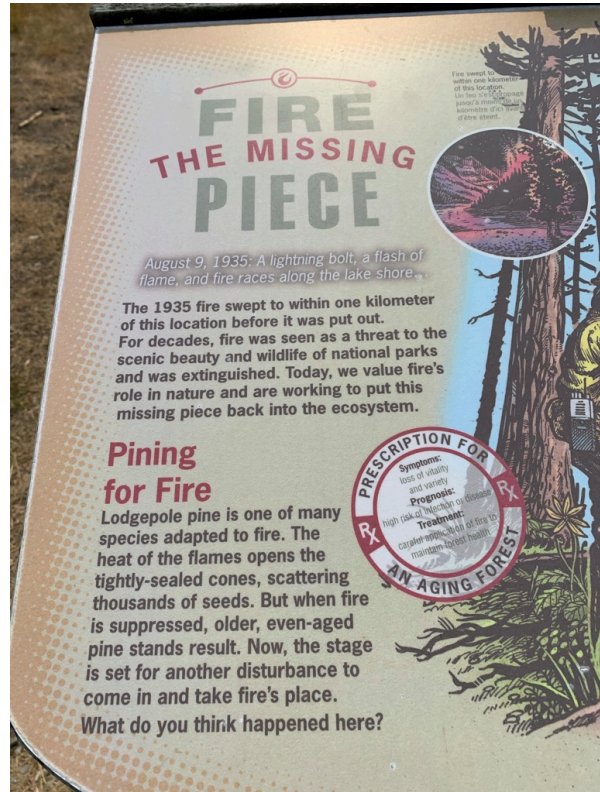
We decided to walk up higher and see it from another perspective. And when we got there, we discovered that instead of looking at the falls, everyone there was looking up in a tree, where there was a bear. One family we talked to said they had actually walked on the other side and had unknowingly walked right under where the bear was. Below is a still from the video I took, so it's fuzzy but you can see the bear in about the middle of the tree.



The next day, which was blisteringly hot, we made the more arduous hike to Bertha Falls. We had to, in honour of Jim's mom whose name was Bertha.



We saw signs that explained the benefits to forests of both the pine beetles and the fires, but throughout the walk (and throughout our entire stay), seeing the thousands and thousands of dead trees was pretty disheartening.



Upon entering the area, we saw another sign, warning us that it was berry season, so we should look out for bears.



Nevertheless, we persisted.



And persisted...



We got higher and the views got more impressive, but we still had a long way to go.



(When I think of this trail now, I think how lucky I was not to break my ankle there!)



At one point, we saw a lookout point and turned to check it out, but to our surprise, the space was already occupied.



It seemed not to care a bit about our proximity, as long as we let it continue eating, which we were happy to do.



Finally we got to a summit ... which was nowhere near the end of our trek!



We continued on, and continued to see the effects of past fires, and current ones.





But we still had a ways
to go.



- ↑ Bertha Falls 1.4 km
Chutes Bertha
- ↑ Bertha Lake 4.2 km
Lac Bertha
- ← Bertha Bay 0.8 km
Baie Bertha
- ← Boundary Bay 4.3 km
Baie Boundary
- ← Goat Huant U.S./E.U. 11.5 km
- Waterton 1.5 km



We saw the growth that happens after fire, the lush green and the vibrant fireweeds, which are known to thrive in areas that fire has ravaged.



And finally the sound and visual evidence of tumbling water. We were getting close!



A few more steps, straight up...



And at last!

Eureka!





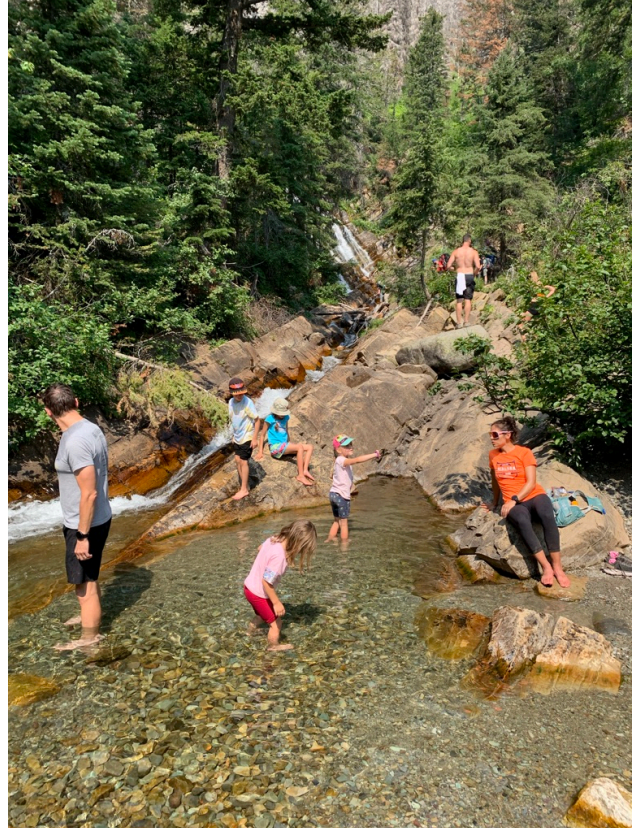
Of course Jim
got more future
video footage.



It was a beautiful waterfall and we were glad we had toughed it out and made the trek.



But we were even happier to join the kids and cool off in the refreshing water, knowing the journey back would be almost as arduous, under an even hotter sun.



Although we took the same route back, we got different views, and some really stunning shots of trees that still stood after the fires of four years ago.





Finally, we made it to our starting point.



After a rest (and I took a dip in the lake) we went for a drive to a different part of the park. It was actually kind of depressing, because it all looked like this:



I couldn't imagine there would be much joy in hiking through the trails in these mountains, but I gather people still do. It makes me realize how important green is to our appreciation of nature.

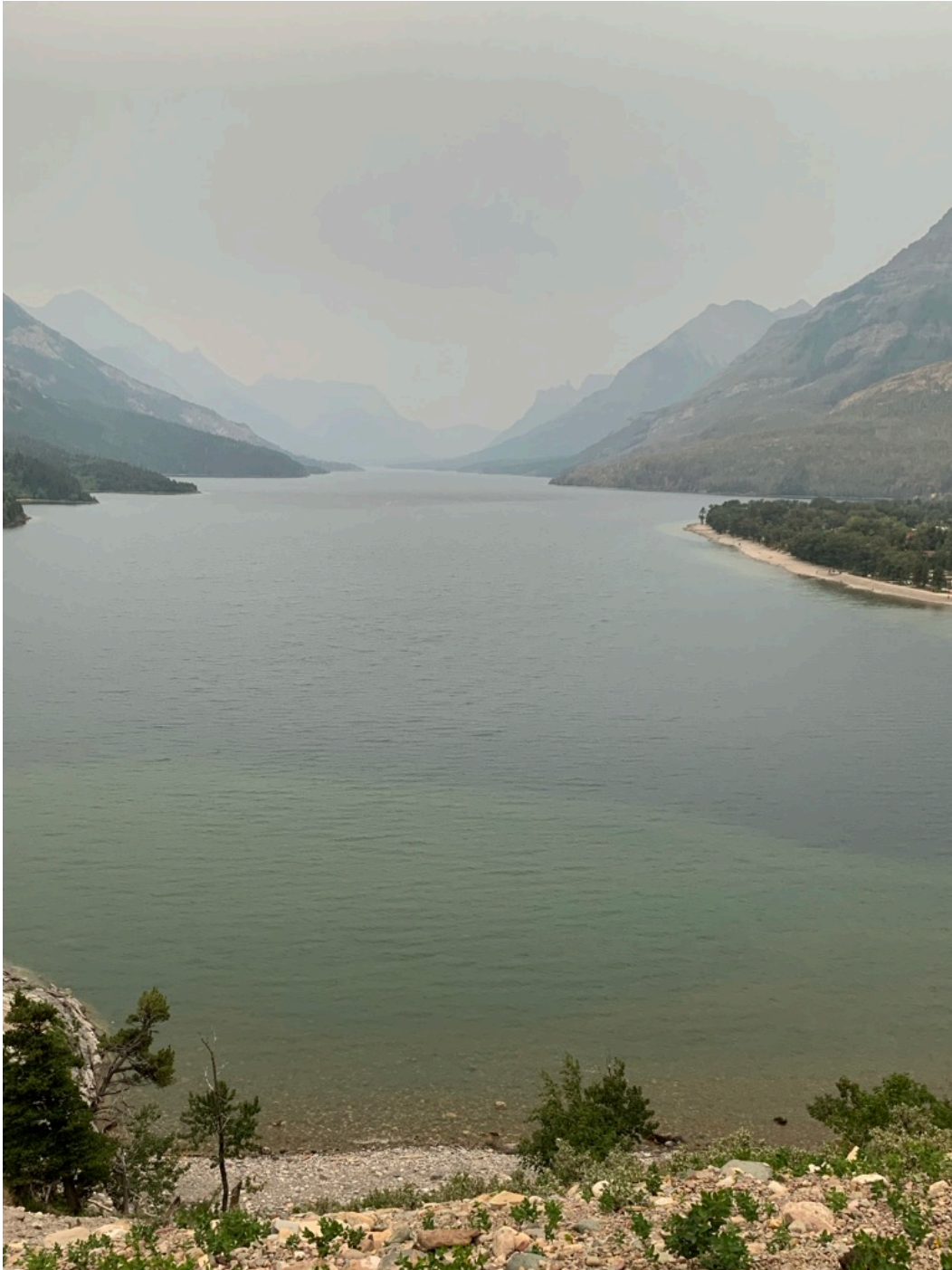
We did have some excitement on the way back though. We had to share the road with some other residents. They kindly took a different route.



We ended our stay with a dinner at the Prince of Wales Hotel that overlooks the lake. It was impressive, inside and out.



And offers its guests this magnificent view (which I imagine is even more magnificent when you can actually see it):



We had arrived!





After a lovely little meal, we went outside to get a better look, and met some more residents, who were not nearly as impressed with us as we were with them.





And on the way home, we saw yet another resident (obviously having found its way out of the tree.)



It was a perfect ending to our perfect stay in Waterton. If at all possible, we will be back.



(Don't forget to watch the duck videos. They're very short. Much shorter than this blog!)