

YUKON

Paddling What River?

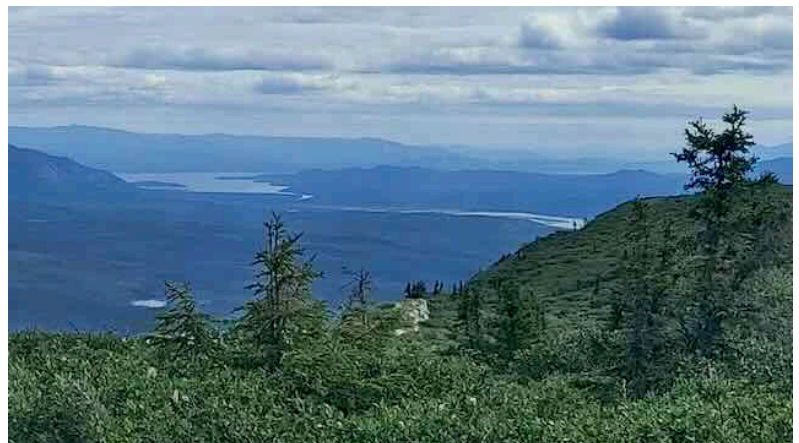
Not Plan A.

Heli Hiking

What a great day!

Exploring Kluane

With mixed results...



Yukon: Larger than life. Maybe. It is huge, it is lightly inhabited by humans, but searching for large wild animals came up wanting!

A canoeing trip down a Yukon river was the first tourist thing we booked for our Canada trip; it started the planning for our whole Canadian Adventure. Unfortunately we didn't get our multi day river paddle - we got a multi-day lake paddle instead

(and fortunately the weather was reasonable for that time because Lake Lebarge has a horrible reputation with wind going opposite current!).



The four full days after our canoeing trip didn't exactly go to plan either, the weather got worse and several walks were missed, and a glacial flight cancelled, because of bad conditions. There was the odd day of good weather - the day we got a helicopter to the top of Grey Mountain above Whitehorse was fantastic. But....

Andrew was quite disappointed with the Yukon. Some of this could have been due to seasonal timing - this year's trip was taken earlier than our original booking two years ago, but there was a distinct lack of wildlife. Yes we saw bears (two only), and elk (about five), and the Whitehorse family of foxes, but that was it for large animals. We had been directed to a couple of spots that may (or may not) have shown us grizzly bears, sheep and moose but we didn't see them. (in fact we came across one person who had been told to avoid walking around Haines Junction because of the amount of grizzly bears). To that I say - what bears! We saw plenty of squirrels - along with a few other small mammals. Birds were more prevalent than mammals and there wasn't a great amount of them either.

I wouldn't necessarily rule out visiting the Yukon again, perhaps later in the season, and perhaps in an area a little more remote, and hopefully somewhere with a chance of getting the wildlife wilderness experience we were expecting this time!



(c) RR



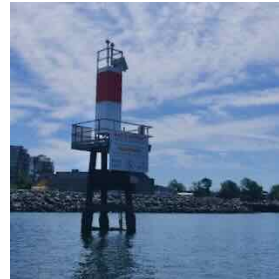


To the Yukon Territory

Leaving BC and following the Sun

27th June 2022. When I read the headlines on the internet to allow for extra time to get on flights at Victoria International Airport, it was too late to think about it. We were already on our way in a taxi. Perhaps we should have left earlier.

After getting some more local currency at a bank down the main street (don't trust Google to find the closest bank to the harbour, - go to the Info Centre) we spent the morning doing 'touro' things in Victoria. A walk down to the harbour got us on a ferry across the harbour to Fisherman's Wharf. Before Covid this had been the 'thing to do', to get off at this destination and walk along the jetties admiring all the floating colourful houses. Now those jetties are blocked off and you only have access to mostly food shops. We didn't look at the non commercial end of the wharf. There is a whale watching mob based on this jetty as well and there happened to be a staff member's dachshund snoozing on the bench. We, of course, said hello. We got the boat back to where we started and ended up spending our last 'touro' hour around some of Victoria's inner suburbs clipping around the



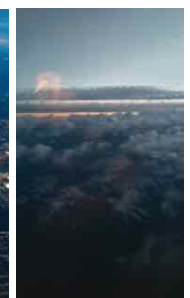
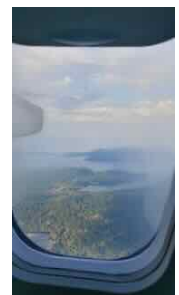
streets in a carriage. The horse was called Clay, and he was a sloppy eater Andrew is not a horse person and it wasn't entirely satisfying - we were hoping for more commentary.

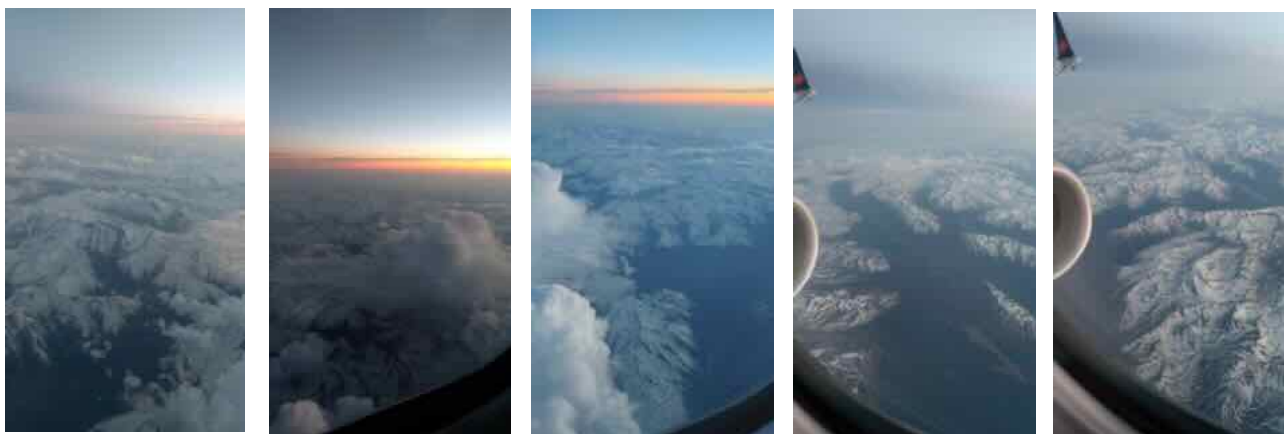
Back at the hotel we ordered a taxi-and got one almost immediately.

Going through airport security was going to be a test. Would they let my metal polish through. They were hesitant when I said 'polish', but let it through when I insisted it wasn't gel. One flight passed - three more to go.

The flight to Vancouver was quick. The wait at Vancouver not too long, but I was glad when we finally got onto the plane to Whitehorse - with all the mucking around we had endured to get here.

It never got totally dark on this day. We followed the sun north! Not being dark meant I could





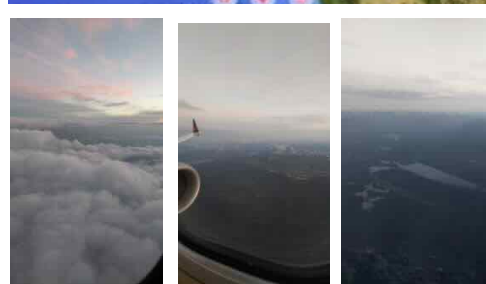
admire the snow topped mountain ranges as we flew over them.

We were greeted by stuffed animals (taxidermies) on the baggage carousel at Whitehorse airport. Whilst masks had been mandatory at Victoria and Vancouver airports, they



were taken off here, whether that was kosher or local ambivalence was not determined. Once we had our baggage we pressed a button on the curb alongside the terminal building and a taxi appeared from its holding area. We don't know if they took the long way to the hotel... we were too tired to take much notice of the terrain outside.

We got to hotel around 0100. Getting our room for tonight (now morning, it was now 28th June) wasn't all that difficult but when we asked if we would be in the same room tomorrow night things got a bit confused. The receptionist knew of five people coming tomorrow for a tour but didn't know which rooms they would be allocated. We would have to ask in the morning.



Greeted in Whitehorse by stuffed animals!



Whitehorse

28th June 2022. This morning we were woken by a noise that sounded like someone was demolishing a shed! It was very noisy. It was also 0545! The alarm was on for 0630 but that didn't matter; we were now awake.

The morning lass behind the reception desk knew even less than the male receptionist the night before.... and we were asked to check out. Really! We have three big bags and we weren't too happy about leaving them in the foyer of this 'close to seedy' hotel. The receptionist said she would keep an eye on them. So this means that we couldn't enjoy the morning exploring town. We had to go and find breakfast, come back, check out and leave our bags by 1100, and then go and find lunch. The tour briefing was at 1300.

We were in the foyer waiting when the tour host, his guide and another tour member came through the door. This tour member got our room form last night which means we could have stayed in our room! The irony and frustration was this was a single tourist who got a room with two beds -we were shoved in a tiny

back room with one bed - less than half the space! Its coffee machine also had no pot, and the kettle provided (yes there was one), clearly hadn't been checked for a while as it was covered in dust and had dusty water in it. This hotel was a disaster. And a disaster waiting to happen - the so called 'Fire Doors' to the stairwells despite having notices on them to remain closed, were chocked open.

I can say our lunch was entertaining though. We went to the same place as we had had breakfast. It was busy. There was only one clean table and it was for six people. The group of four behind us suggested to the waitress that we would all take the six seater rather than wait. Our lunch buddies were two from the east coast and two locals, one of whom happened to be a bird biologist - pity we found out this interesting piece of information toward the end of our time together.

The tour briefing was in the local park, dodging the occasional drizzle of rain. The water levels of the rivers, the host told us, are still way too high. He apologised but the 'river canoe paddle' was now essentially going to be be mainly a 'lake paddle'. There was nothing we could do about this; a late melt meant it was potentially dangerous to paddle the rivers, particularly for beginners. It wasn't quite what we had signed up for. The late afternoon was spent shopping, doing laundry and packing. Dinner was with our new touring companions.

Tomorrow we would be responsible for our own breakfast. After that we were on the canoeing tour!





Yukon Paddling Days

28TH JUNE 2022 TO 8TH JULY 2022

(c) Trish Ebert

Whitehorse to Lake Lebarge

The Aussie contingent was Andrew and Trish, the Bavarians, Michel, Silvi, Tom
And Ryan and Laura, who'd come over west, were also paddling along
To the Yukon they flew, this adventurous crew, to have a mighty good look,
And they took Brian the guide, along for the ride; because they needed a cook

The planned destination, the River of Teslin, for some already Plan B
Morphed yet again, into the mighty Yukon, so this was change number three
The downtown launch happened on queue, after the safety pep talk
And then we were off, heading down river, paddling safely in line, but of course.

But the host he had felt, with all the snow melt, water levels were still way too high
So the contingency plan, so we'd have access to land, and a dry place to camp overnight
Was to paddle 'LeBarge, part the way round - down the east side, across, backup west
Fifteen kay's done each day, was about all that we'd make, before camp, and an afternoon rest

If the weather was warming, and mosquitos not swarming, some braved an afternoon dip
Others read for fun, or lay in the sun, or just had an afternoon kip
Around five o'clock we'd gather again, the fire and coffee pot on,
Dinner was generally eaten by six, and fireside tales rattled on

Breakfasts consisted of toast, jam and cheese; sometimes it was bacon and eggs
Or maybe granola or left over spuds - but the coffee was never the dregs



Lunch was usually made up on the run, bread with cheese,
cucumber, and for those who could, meat
And apples for fibre, and nuts and a cuppa, and the
occasional very sweet treat.

Dinner was cooked on the fire where we could
And everyone helped with the collection of wood
The axe and the saw were sometimes needed
And wind direction and strength, were always well heeded

And camp was packed up, each morning by ten
With canoes all well loaded to head out again

The washroom facilities were a sight to be held, if they even
existed at all
From bright green tub thrones, back up hill in the bush, or a
box with an open wood door,
Other arrangements included a spade, and required a
resistance to pain,
But some planned ahead, and Deet was applied, to areas of
unfamiliar terrain.

Big critters were scarce and not to be seen, and hoped for
wildlife was rare

A deer mouse in one spot, and chipmunks as well, but
squirrels made up the main fare

A few birds were noted, including bald eagles but no
herbivores, black bears or geese

No elk, nor no deer, nor wolves noted near, and sadly no
promised mooses!

We saw ancient scat, and someone saw scratches, and we
heard several coyote yelping

But given the lake was surrounded by rock, the terrain was
definitely not helping!

Feathered friends included the swallows, the merganzers, and
common loons,

And lots of white gulls, some with their chicks, and quite a few
sandpipers too

Eagles were perched on dead sticks and branches, as well as
a kingfisher flying

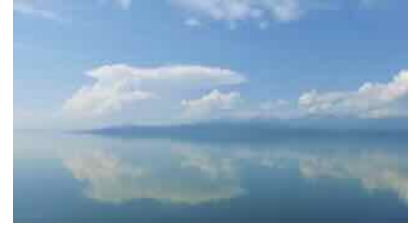
But despite our best efforts and all of us looking, not much
else of note were we spying

We spent seven days camping 'Lebargé

At well known camps where we could

Or we'd make do with shore rocks under our tent

With the help of stabilising wood







Tahkini River

KASAWA TO MEDENHALL LANDING

For the two final days we managed to paddle
down a river at last
Although water levels were still a bit high
And still a little too fast

From campground Lebarge we drove over-land,
And camped at Kasawa Lake
Rainer had joined us and gave us some lessons
Then the Tahkini River we did take.

The Tahkini was running quite high and quite fast
The riffles quite bumpy, and a pleasure to pass
But the rapids presented quite a new test
And the crew sussed the path out, that the leaders
thought best

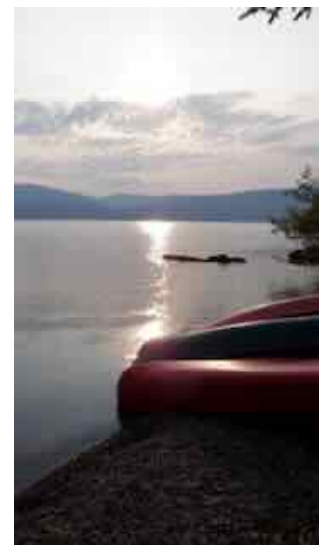
However three of us piked the final white brew
Our canoes brought around by sturdier crew
Those riding the white having way too much fun
But the three were quite happy for skipping this run

Then after the rapids a short distance away
A mozzie ridden campsite was our last stay
Lentils and left overs the journey's last dish
Complimented nicely with Rainers caught fish!

Thunder and rain had threatened most days, but we
didn't really get wet
A few minutes here, and a few rain drops there, and a
tarp under shelter we sat

A farewell dinner at Whitehorse was had, before most
of the crew flew away
But perhaps in the future we'll look back and
remember; our Yukon Paddling Days.







(c) RR



(c) R



Unprepared for Royalty

To Carcross (and beyond)

8th July 2022. I woke up at 0430. Whilst two in our group were probably getting in a taxi at this moment to head to the airport for an early flight, my awakening wasn't by choice, I was pried out of my slumber by sirens; whether they were ambulances (the hospital isn't that far away) or fire engines (there have been several fires in the area that are on the list as being out of control) I was not to know. But I was awake enough, at least for a short time, not to go back to sleep again.

So I answered a couple of emails, checked the news (Australian) and tried to work out just what the last email from the slipway meant. They had sent us a transaction receipt but I know despite being paid up for two months, that the balance would be mucked up as they had upped their prices in the change of financial year.

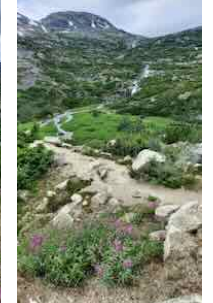
The rest of the day started out with a disappointing morning, specifically at breakfast at Burnt Toast, a cafe we'd been to twice before. We managed to get a window seat this morning and ordered a coffee and hot chocolate. Andrew had asked for a shot in the dark, which is apparently what you ask for if you want a strong coffee - which can't be provided for if there is only filter or drip coffee. It has taken seven weeks for someone to tell us this. Burnt Toast could only provide drip coffee, so he reluctantly accepted this. By the time the hot drinks came out the



cream in my hot chocolate had melted into the brew and the chocolate syrup had sunk to the bottom. We ordered breakfast . And waited. And waited. And waited. I thought if I went to the washroom that Murphys Law would have the breakfast delivered. When I got back to the table Andrew had got a second coffee. But no plates had turned up. Forty minutes after we arrived we were asked how would we like to pay the bill. What! But we haven't had breakfast yet! It came within 30 seconds and it was cold! We were getting a lift to the car rental place at around 0930 and we had to get back to the hotel. We didn't have time to get breakfast redone - we ate what was presented. That's one cafe off the list.

Our lift turned up on time and it was again a final farewell to our host tour company when they dropped us off near the airport. Because they hadn't had time to give us a lift and drop another traveller off at the airport, we shot back to the hotel to provide the transport, dropping off one of our companions for the past week or so for his flight out of Whitehorse.

Then, because the other potential driving task had been taken out of our hands (we were going to stick around town today so we were available to give a lift to other travellers to the airport at 1630) we made a whimsical decision. Instead of an evening drive to Carcross, why don't we go this morning, But we left straight from the



airport; we didn't go back to the hotel. So we had no snacks, nothing for lunch, no warm clothing, no raincoat, and I didn't have my good camera!. A crazy idea about getting to Skagway for lunch was aborted when we re read the rental agreement (no crossing borders without prior written permission) so we got within 24 kilometres of Alaska's famous gold rush town!

But we did get to the border; Andrew and the car around 50 meters from it, and I walked closer to it. We couldn't cross, or more precisely as we had asked at the Canadian Customs building twelve kilometres before, we couldn't go past the 'Welcome to the USA' sign (just inside the US border) or else we would be obliged to keep travelling to the US Customs checkpoint thirteen kilometres further on. So close to the famous town, yet so far away.

The most obvious thing at Carcross is the Whites Pass Railway Station, where you get on for the day train ride to Skagway. Two years ago I had tried to arrange this trip into the spare days at Whitehorse. This year, because of Air Canada's mucking around with our flights, we had less time in Whitehorse than preferred. Which meant the train trip was off the list. Other touro buildings here included one touted to be the oldest operating general store in the Territory (where we patted the resident golden retriever), and the haunted hotel next to it (I read somewhere purported to be once owned by Tagish Charlie (who along with George Carmacks and Skookum Jim started the Klondike Gold

Rush) . We met a couple of tourists who encouraged us to have a look at the hotel (which we didn't end up doing). They also invited us in for drink to their house if we passed it in Saskatchewan.

Carcross, at the end of Bennet Lake (famously the start of the river journey for those getting to the Klondike Gold Fields), is essentially a tiny settlement with a few run down houses and a tourist area. At the gaggle of tourist shops I bought a pair of ear rings - the same style that Catherine, English Duchess of Cambridge, had worn on her visit to Canada. They are styled in the shape of an Inuit cutting tool. I was also delighted when asking for a decaf cappuccino at another of the touro shops that I actually got chocolate sprinkled on top! Ah, I exclaimed to the barista. He knew exactly what I was exclaiming for. Yes, we have the chocolate on top where I come from too, he explained in his South American accent.

We headed back to Whitehorse from Carcross through Tagish to see more scenery.

Ignoring our morning debacle, it was a great day. The scenery was amazing. Because it was a spontaneous decision and we were preparing to go back to the hotel room after the airport drop off, I didn't have my big camera - I just hoped I wouldn't see any moose. Part way through the day my little camera lost power so I was left with the dwindling power in my phone, and I couldn't stop taking photographs through the window as we were driving.



We got back to Whitehorse around 1800. Dinner was a very dry roast chook with salad, followed by gluten free apple pie.

Of course - having had no real exercise during the day we then took an evening stroll. That's where we got our wildlife experience!



This is the town fox family. They seem to stick to the one home (dilapidated building so hopefully no one pulls it down) and everybody knows about them. They were wary of us but not too worried - as long as they could see where we were. Mum and one of the cubs wandered past us about half an hour after these were taken - we were at the other end of town



SS Klondike II at the SS Klondike National Historic Site. This was a *late* evening walk - we didn't get to do the guided tour!





Grey Mountain

Heli Hiking:

9th July 2022. This morning started with frustration, which morphed into general amusement at 'Yukon Time' delays, and then there was 'Wow!' Overall, it was a great day.

For our last full day in Whitehorse I had booked a heli-hike to the top of Grey Mountain. Considering that during our Canada trip just about everything that was pre-booked two years ago had had issues, had been changed, or had not happened at all, and those activities booked at the 'last' minute tended to work out, I wasn't sure what was going to happen with today's little adventure. After the first activity of today day I was bracing myself for 'lets' put that down to experience.'

The first activity was trying to get a cheque cashed. You would think this would be a simple activity. The cheque was written by a customer of the bank that we headed into. It was written directly to Andrew so in theory all he had to do was produce his passport to get the cash. But no, apparently if you aren't a Canadian citizen you can't cash cheques at this bank - policy apparently. Clearly they don't have any laws regarding negotiable instruments - if you were in Australia you would be strung up

for refusing this activity. Of course we couldn't get hold of the person who had written us the cheque, so we are just going to have to wait until we can organise an alternate transaction sometime in the future. Deep breath.

So we headed off to today's main activity a little frustrated, and more than half an hour early. The office of the tour company doesn't open until 1000 so we hung around the Visitor Centre across the street for a little while. Just prior to ten however apparently the side gate to the premises was open; but we didn't see this, so waited out the front until another staff member turned up to let us in. By the time we had got all the waivers signed it was around 1030. By the time we got to the helicopter base it was around 1045. Once we got to the helicopter base we found, as we had been delayed a bit, that the 'copter we were booked on had gone on an emergency equipment run (I assume for one of the fires currently burning in the area) and it was due back in another forty five minutes at 11.30. Given it was that long a wait we headed across the Alaska Highway 1 to the cafe at the hotel for 'coffee.'

Well, that was an experience in itself. This hotel is one of two that are next to the airport. Two years ago, when our flights out of town had been scheduled to around 0600 I had looked at both airport hotel options. The Skky Hotel was expensive but looked normal; the other option, the hotel we walked into this morning, looked quite skanky on the 'web, and that was when you could actually find any pictures. So we walked into the full-ish cafe, sat down in the dining room, and the waitress came up and asked if we wanted coffee. The guide was sensible enough to just want water. Andrew of course is a coffee drinker. This place looked like the stereotypical American diner in the movies - the waitress turning up at the table with two mugs and a glass jug of black stuff. To its credit, Andrew tells me, it was quite thick and reasonable to drink. I however asked if she did hot chocolate. The look on her face was quite derisive - but I did get one. Andrew ended up with another cup - poured by a waiter this time - before we headed back to the helicopter base for the flight.

The helicopter still wasn't back in yet. The pilot we were talking to (who ended up as our pilot) was giving us periodic updates (and graphics, we could see the machine's progress south along Lake Lebarge), until the machine finally arrived



at the hanger. From an initial meeting scheduled at 1000 at the tour company's premises, to getting to the hanger and taking off, it had now taken over two hours.



I do have to say, however, that the safety briefing was quite comprehensive; it included how the pilot wanted us strapped in, and how to use the earphones and mic, to what buttons to press and how to operate the signalling options if we found ourselves in a situation where he was compromised or incapacitated. Of course that was a situation we didn't want to think about, but I was impressed with the detail.



Now for the flight. It was only scheduled for around 10 minutes — Grey Mountain overlooks the city of Whitehorse - but it was an experience in itself. The views from the Bell Ranger were amazing. But if the flight was one thing; the landing was quite another.



Think the M.A.S.H television series. Think Alan Alda getting out of the helicopter (a slightly more open one than ours) in the opening credits, and ducking to head to the back of the machine to pick up cargo (in his case usually dead or injured

bodies on stretchers, in our case back packs and bear spray). Think waving the pilot okay to lift off with a thumbs up. The only difference in our case was instead of exiting to one side, we



were instructed to gather at the nose, where the pilot could see us - within a foot or so of the front of the machine. The helicopter



engine was running all this time, the blades going, the pilot ready to lift off, and at the time to say goodbye and



give the okay, the most gentle straight up lifting into the sky.

It was the most amazing experience!

If that had been the only activity for the day we would all (Andrew, me and the guide) have been satisfied. But; we had a mountain to hike.

Where we had landed was just short of the north end peak of the top ridge line of Grey Mountain. So once the helicopter had gone we headed to the north end peak to sit down, have a snack - it was now well and truly 'lunch time' - and admire the view. And it was magnificent. The day held clouds but they weren't threatening - instead they supplied interest to the sky. The wind was a tad chilly up on top and having only a t-



shirt on I put my light weight hiking fleecy on for a time. Andrew managed as he was, but he was wearing a long sleeved hike shirt. The guide ended up putting his rain jacket on, initially to stop the wind chill but then as it got warmer and we got into more sheltered areas along the top track, to save his arms from the mosquitos!



From Whitehorse looking up, Grey Mountain doesn't look that big. From the top of Grey Mountain however you start to

appreciate just how high you are, and just how far you can see; from Lake Lebarge in the north to Marsh Lake in the south, with Whitehorse in between. It was, to use a cliché, gobsmacking.

Until we got to the high point at the southern end of the ridge (where most people get to but come from the other direction so don't walk along the 'ridge') we only saw one other person. He was pushing a bike and having a tough-ish time of it. Whilst clearly he had done an amazing job to get where he was, he was looking to get off the mountain at the end we'd come from. 'Apparently there is a track at this end,' he said. 'We have no idea,' I replied, 'we came in by helicopter.' His jaw didn't drop completely - in fact the movement was very subtle, and his eyes possibly made the bigger move, opening in quiet surprise. The look was priceless. We all noticed it. I hope he found a track - it would have been a hell of a trip to get back the way he had come.

I guess the main track on top of the mountain is more obvious coming from the 'normal' direction. Whilst we were mainly on a 'main' track we did stray occasionally onto other lesser defined pathways and/or possibly animal tracks - sometimes it wasn't obvious which way to go when there were two equally ambiguous options. Fortunately we got through without any major cross country activity.

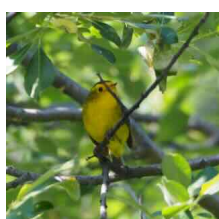
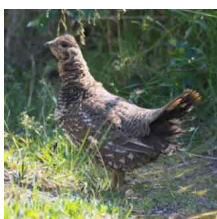
We arrived at the highest spot just as one couple left, and then passed several groups of walkers heading up to the top of the mountain as we headed down.



Our detour off the main track before the radio towers was deliberate, so we could come out on the road much further down, but the track we followed was clearly only very occasionally used; the path was in some sections overgrown, in patches the ground was swampy, and there was a couple of small creek crossings and several fallen trees to negotiate. This downhill section was an

adventure in itself; spruce grouse and chicks seen (by the time I switched the lens over on the good camera I only got a photo of mum), a Wilson's warbler was very close to the track, and lots of mosquitos made up the wildlife on the down hill run (we had seen an American Pipit just at the start of our walk). Vegetation on this section was completely different to the alpine area above, and thick enough that we occasionally called 'Bear Bear'. My feet unfortunately slowed us down a little here. Given the issues I've had with walking boots over the past couple of years (see some notes in Aboard Sengo), I was wearing the pair I had bought in Brisbane last September. They are much narrower than the Keens unfortunately and loosening them up to save my toes was not one hundred percent successful; I couldn't loosen too much as whilst I would allow more room from side to side, it would mean there was forward and back movement. I didn't get black toes but all ten digits were very sore at the end of the walk.

We were picked up further down the road than originally hoped for, as the host was driving a people mover waiting for a flight of tourists that hadn't arrived - We could have been picked up further up the mountain had she been driving the 4WD we'd been transported in this morning.



We were dropped back off at the hotel, and after a cuppa and a rest went downstairs to dine again at Georgio's. They were very busy, and short staffed and we were sort of forgotten until a staff member, who had just arrived on shift, realised we hadn't been attended to. Andrew had the pizza he had ordered when we had the farewell dinner of our canoeing group. I had the steak I had ordered at the first dinner with our canoeing group. Andrew's pizza was fine. My steak tough (the colour perfect so I couldn't blame the chef/cook, I just think it was an unhappy cow) but I was hungry and wasn't going to wait to send it back. The waiter wanted to make up for it by offering me Tiramisu for desert - something Andrew would normally not refuse in an Italian restaurant because it is usually home made - but we couldn't fit it in. Besides I wanted a shower, and I had washing to do. It was already 2145. The sun was still very bright in the sky; it was going to be a late, but light, night. Sunset below the horizon was at 2300.



To Kluane!

Whitehorse to Haines Junction

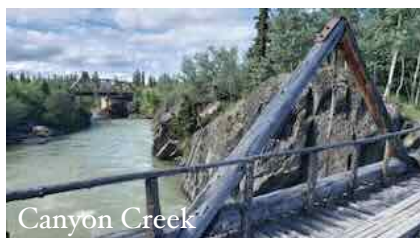
10th July 2022 I was up early. Andrew didn't get up until quite a bit later; frustratingly for me as I wanted to get going. Breakfast was cereal, yoghurt and raspberries that we had in room and after packing up and fiddling about it was after 1000 when we left the hotel. Our first stop was at Mac's Fireweed Bookshop - to get a copy of. Sibley Birds West. We had been advised that this was probably the right book some time ago when we were back in Aus from a fellow with very strong links to the area. This was reiterated by the bird biologist we had met in The Burnt Toast Cafe on the first morning we were in Whitehorse. Of course there were two versions of Sibley on the shelf, but the larger book I suspect covered the east side of the continent as well (didn't have the word 'west' on the cover) and it was quite a bit heavier so we stuck to the smaller volume.

There had been discussion of a couple of Whitehorse activities this morning before leaving the area - the main one being the Wildlife Preserve where I suspect I might get to see this mythical moose. However given the length of the path (5km) and me wanting a rest day for my feet (yesterdays walk wasn't technically all that

long it was just a bit tough on my rubbing toes) then the bus tour would have been the way to go. However the later bus tours were not an option and the first one was at 1100. Even if we had decided on this activity, we wouldn't have made it.

We filled the 'gas' tank of the vehicle opposite the airport at 1044 and headed out of town. Our first stop was at a roadside rest area predominantly so I could access the 'muesli' bars that had been packed in the back of the car. There was a small deck here with some interps boards 'overlooking' the Takhini Valley. We were just looking into bush so the trees have grown up since the interps were put up - fortunately - apparently the 1958 fire in this area took a lot of both trees and seeds out of the system.

Our second stop to stretch the legs was at Canyon Creek - the historical bridge not quite all original as it had been repaired several times. It was a remnant of the Kluane Gold Rush. The new Highway built in the early '40s built a new bridge. Between these bridges was where the highway sign was to welcome you to Kluane Country. There was also a note on an interps board here of introduced Wood Bison and their range (which



sidled up to the road). So now we were hopefully looking for Moose and Wood Bison.

There are two Visitor Centres around Kluane and we popped into the first one just as you head into the town of Haines Junction. There are two desks here; the general desk as you walk into the big architecturally designed building, and a Parks desk hidden up the back behind the interps displays. My main question to the Parks officer was going to be, assuming all walks were open (which they were), were there any areas we should avoid due to excessive bear activity. We got the impression we are going to see bears everywhere (Grizzlies) and that was unavoidable. I also asked about Mooses - apparently it is possible to see them along the road! Who needs to paddle down a river! Dropping into our accommodation early (after 2pm) we were told to come back at 3pm when the room would be ready. A recommendation for a late lunch was the Village Bakery just down the road (we could walk there). There was only one option for me, a salad, but I was happy with that. And the berry smoothie wasn't that bad either. We then checked out the Green Apple, the town's grocery store (a tiny general store with not much in it that I could eat but the biggest marsh mellows I've ever seen) before being able to check into our room.

A small walk was on the cards for this afternoon - a flat 6 km, but we needed to check into the hotel first so we could sort out our day packs - they were filled



Yes, my bum does look big in that! But more importantly I weigh the same as 464 pikas, 159 newborn grizzly bears, 0.8 of a Dall Sheep (ram), 0.58 of an adult grizzly and 1.59 wolves! On Average, clearly!



with anything we could stuff in them to get out of the last hotel. After a cuppa we headed out again to the Dazeldiesh Trail. We both had short sleeves on - and with the local mozzies, both regretted it - I ended up spraying the back of Andrew's t-shirt with insect repellent.

Our walk was cut short. We passed a young couple carrying a baby walking swiftly the other way as we idled along the trail. It was a slightly funny encounter. I had just called Bear Bear when they arrived, and my bell ringing off the bottom of my pack and her bell ringing equally as



loudly jingled past each other like Santa's sleigh bells - it was a cute little piece of music for a few seconds but I suspect we are too far south to see 'reindeer.' Although Rudolph would be forgiven having a red nose at the moment - it was cold! We took longer than I expected to get to the lookout. At the boardwalk sections across each marsh-ish area we had noticed the rain coming along the mountains on the other side of the river valley, wiping out more of the dramatic mountain view each time. When we got to the lookout we realised the rain was coming our way as well. So we headed back down the lookout stairs to the first drops, and back towards the car as the drops became more prevalent. At one point we put our rain jackets on but the rain seemed to drop off and stop shortly after this. I had been advised that rain around here was not like in Vancouver; shortly after it rains here apparently you wonder whether it has rained at all. The sky looked clear when we got back to the car but we weren't turning around to go back out again.

For dinner we popped into the local Chinese restaurant for some takeaway - our room is relatively small but has a lovely little window side table to eat a meal. For some reason I was feeling particularly lethargic and went to bed early. I am not sure what time Andrew went to sleep.

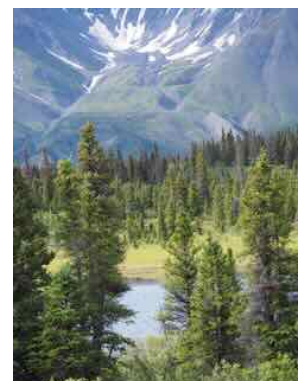
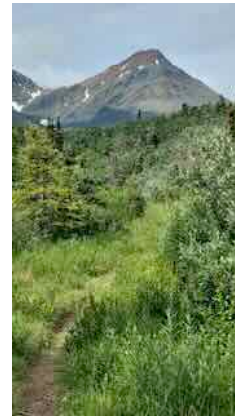




Auriole Trail

11th July 2022.





The flight that never was

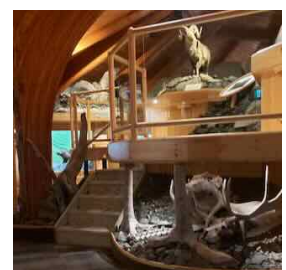
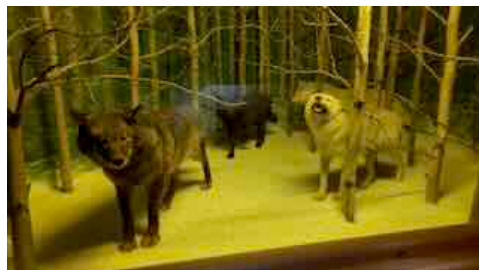
12th July 2022. It was not looking like the weather was going to play ball today. It was overcast and rainy. Would it clear up as we hoped? We had a plane ride booked to land on a glacier that we had originally booked two years ago. The flight was scheduled for early afternoon.

Because the flight was a bit over an hour away north and not something we could leave the timing to the last minute, we headed north this morning to explore anyway. The weather was too miserable for a walk, but there was a 'museum' at Burwash Landing at the top of Lake Kluane. When we arrived it was closed. But we were technically just ahead of opening time. However the website states that because of a variety of factors that they are short of staff and as the business may not be open at advertised opening hours; it is best to book a tour before you come. We hadn't done that so we went for a short drive around the settlement of Burwash Landing to fill in time. I had grabbed a brochure on some of the old buildings of Burwash Landing a couple of days ago but of course I had left it behind in the accommodation! None the less we got back to the museum and there were now cars in the car park, as well as some shivering tourists; it was too cold for us to have a look at the small display out the front.

Inside the building is mainly filled with old style panoramas and stuffed animals, along with a small room of minerals and a couple of displays of First Nations relics. Whilst the displays are old



fashioned the information on each animal is succinct and interesting. There are a couple of short videos, which for the attention span needed (you had to stand up as the screen is small and at 'head height') are slightly longer than suitable. By the time we left the premise it was surprisingly full with people.



We had lunch at a truck stop on the way south, where you are greeted as you walk in the restaurant end of the premise by a giant moose head. There was only one option that I could easily consume; a salad - but I modified it making sure there was no bell pepper and added some chicken. Heading towards the airport after lunch there was another short stop at the second visitor's centre in the area. This was a tiny building with only a few displays and we didn't stay long. It was freezing and as it was possible we may be going up on to the glacier it would be colder still. I used the toilets to change into my thermals but they were outside drop toilets and not that clean.

When we got to the location of the flight we highly suspected we weren't going to go up. But no one was answering the door. There were people inside but they were ignoring us. We were, admittedly, quite a bit early. Maybe they don't want to talk to us yet. So we filled in the gap by heading toward Silver City. Silver City was the supply line to the Kluane Gold Rush and Haines Junction before the road and Burwash Landing were established. Silver City is not really on any map as a tourist destination, in fact there is a homestead at the end of the road, and a boat ramp next to it although we didn't go to the water's edge. There are however quite a few falling down and overgrown log cabins along the road, and probably many more scattered out of view.

When we got back to base and we could get the attention of

someone it was confirmed, we weren't going up. Perhaps we could schedule to tomorrow afternoon as I had suggested originally two days ago. The company was taking people in an 0800 flight anyway for supplies; they would know if further flights were feasible after that.

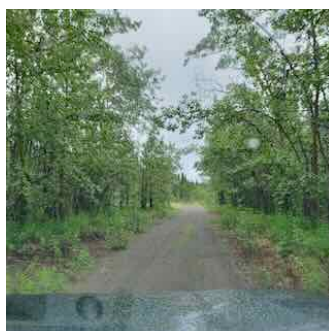
On the way back to town we tried a detour. On our quest to see moose I figured we would have a better chance on secondary roads. Looking at Google Maps I found a route that looked like it came out near Pine Lake; a location our



This lookout is no longer a look out. The trees have grown up!

host had canoes on (but we didn't have time to try them out). But the detour didn't quite go to plan. We followed one logging road which was mostly in good condition, but held no challenges that we couldn't handle; bearing in mind that unlike Vancouver Island this time we didn't exactly have a 4WD and had no recovery gear. This first road was due to end in a t-intersection where we would turn right. When we got to said t-intersection we found that the left hand option was probably only suitable for a tractor - it clearly hadn't been used for years, and the right hand option looked, initially reasonable. We followed this until we came to a puddle. Well, it was a big puddle. A water hazard that I would probably not have even taken a 4WD through, even if I had had one with all the recovery gear. So Andrew backed the vehicle up to the next available turn around point, and after four or so points headed back the way we came. We saw no big animals and only a few birds.

There are not a lot of options in town for dinner; so it was back to takeaway Chinese again.



The Kings Throne

or at least his footstool!

13th July 2022. Today was the best option for the next two days for a walk so we cancelled the possible flight (which we wouldn't know the legitimacy of until after 0800 anyway) for preference for two legged exercise.

Our choices were a 14 kilometre easy walk, a 15 kilometre medium walk, or a 10 kilometre medium walk that could be adjusted to a 15 kilometre hard option.

We chose the latter - but before we had started the walk we had basically decided on the shorter version of it. Of course everything had relied on the weather and the fog and cloud was quite low this morning - climbing to the top of the Kings Throne may not give us a view even if we went right to the top. And as we got further up the scree, that idea was cemented.

We made the base of the cirque after a long, hard, and very slow, slog up. My feet were playing up a little but we thought we would try for the Throne's saddle at the back of the cirque. It was when we saw four other walkers struggling up the final ascent at the back of the cirque (one on the ice/snow rather than the scree) that we decided enough was enough, and we found a suitably large rock (the largest around) to sit, admire the view and have a nibble. The cloud had cleared a bit on the way up, and then closed in a bit again. The track to the summit turns off at the bottom of the cirque. Several climbers got to this spot and turned around; their original idea to get to the top but they realised



their chance to get the view may have to wait for another day. A few more hikers decided to stay around the cirque to see if the cloud cleared; according to windy.com the weather was supposed to clear up in the afternoon.

But by the time we left after our break the weather was coming in again, and I rued the fact I had left my gloves back in our room - my hands were getting very cold!

At the bottom of the scree climb we stopped at a seat and chatted to a woman already there - I dubbed this seat the 'oh my god do I have to climb that,' seat - or the 'thank god that is over,' seat., depending on whether you were heading up the track or back down it. This woman will be on the same plane as us to Calgary on Friday.

My toes were playing up by the time we got back to the car but the patch on the back of my heel, put on at the cirque, had worked. Andrew had no injuries at the end of the walk - but neither of us wanted to do any more walking today. By the time we got down to the day area at Kathleen Lake not much had changed - the bottom of the cloud layer was still hovering around the level of the lower edge of the cirque - perhaps the cloud was lifting a bit, or perhaps it was not

When we got back to town we thought we would pop our heads in to say hello to the pub - apparently the cook is an Aussie. According to the notice on the door it should be open. The door however was locked and it looked very dark inside. We could see one body but the

establishment didn't look like it was close to opening. As we got back in the car, the door was opened, but the staff member didn't look our way; I felt as though he had opened the door reluctantly because we were there, and deliberately not looked at us. Given that didn't go in. Instead after buying an Australian red at the liquor store, and some ham and cheese at the grocery store we totted back to our room to pay the bill and settle in for the evening with toasted cheese and ham sandwiches for dinner.

Animals spotted along the track; a red squirrel and a small chipmunk.



Where should we go?

14th July 2022. We had a choice -head north-east up a dirt road where there was a good chance of possibly seeing moose. But according to Windy it was going to be raining all day up there. Or, head south where we could go for a short walk and windy.com had no rain predicted at all. But the chance of seeing moose may be reduced.

We went south. And true to form it didn't rain - at least not for a while. And to start it off, at the beginning of the walk the sun was actually shining. I hoped the sun would stick around longer but it was eventually shaded out by clouds.

We had actually seen some wildlife before we got to the walk start at around 60km south of Haines Junction. First there was a kamikaze squirrel who ran across the road in front of us from left to right. The road was clear enough for Andrew to swerve to the left to get out of the way. The squirrel however turned around when three quarters of the way across the road and returned from whence it had come from. We missed the animal. I don't know how, but it wasn't by much.

The second spot was a large 'black' bear along the side of the road up on the bank opposite Dezeldaesh Lake. He was on the west (my) side of the road and so by the time we turned around and returned to the spot where he was I was shooting pictures through Andrew's window across the road. Respecting the animal



and the guidelines of not sticking around a wild animal for more than a minute, we left him alone soon after. He only looked at us once - he was more concerned about getting his tongue around the chosen vegetation. I haven't checked the photos yet - so may not have photos of the tongue - but he really couldn't care less that we were there.

The next black bear was smaller, crossing the road in front of us and slow enough that we had to stop to allow the animal to cross the road and get off. I took one photo and got Andrew to move along. We had a car behind us and I didn't want to hold up traffic although the car behind us stopped for a closer look.

The St Elias Lake Trail was easy, and quiet- a squirrel and a couple of chipmunks the only animals seen, although there was some bear scat in several places along the trail. There was also possible Moose and other prints., large ungulate looking impressions with huge strides. The only birds along the trail were the American Robin and the junco. A lone loon was on the lake when we got there. There were two tents in the campground but the camp was quiet for a few minutes before two young ladies emerged and made noise - surely, if they were up that late, they could have waited twenty or thirty minutes later and let us have a nice quiet rest. Perhaps they were feeling guilty about leaving the camp area such a mess; three water bottles and a hiking stove had been left near the fire pit. The food bags were hung but really in bear country! On the way back we

passed eight other hikers heading to the lake - it was going to be a busy spot for lunch.

Back at the car we had a choice - head back north or head south. I had the guide on where to spot wildlife along Yukon's highways so we headed south. The guide was clearly written some time ago as lookouts were not that clear anymore. We did however spot an American Dipper at Million Dollar Falls as had been suggested in the guide, and spotted a pair of trumpeter swans with a couple of cygnets from the railing of the highway, in the lake/waterbody where they were supposed to be. We stopped along the side of the road opposite another wetland area that looked perfect for moose. No moose but one river otter was spotted in the distance.



We were back at Haines Junction before 1600. Dinner was a glass of wine, herb dip with rice crackers and toasted pastrami and cheese sandwiches. The evening activity when we got the energy was packing up.



Leaving the Yukon

Whitehorse to Calgary

15th July 2022. Apparently it was around seven degrees Celsius early this morning when we left Haines Junction. I found this out chatting to the hiker we'd met at the Kings Throne a couple of days ago when we ran into her at Whitehorse airport this morning. All we knew of the specifics of the temperature however was that it was mighty cold!

After packing up and grabbing something to go for breakfast at the Village Bakery we headed east. The roadworks slowed us up a bit, we had to wait for a pilot car, but there were no other hassles with our drive to Whitehorse. I kept an eye out for Moose but didn't see any. We dropped into our canoe hosts place to pick up some cash (because his cheque wasn't able to be cashed on the 9th) and then found ourselves at the airport three hours early. I had asked Andrew if he wanted to go into town first, have a coffee and say goodbye to town etc for an hour, or whether we just head straight to the airport and get things settled there. We headed straight to the airport, but in hindsight should have had that coffee. Efficiency had made sense at the time. We were to find out that perhaps that wasn't the best idea.

The flight was at 1230. The security gate didn't open until 1100 so we sat, in the small lounge, waiting for the doors to open. When the seats were full people started queuing so there



Where the Wild Things are...

The Yukon—home to more than 160,000 Caribou,
70,000 Moose, 22,000 Mountain Sheep,
6,000 Grizzly Bears, 220 species of birds...
and 34,000 humans.

Supposedly!

was quite a few people standing when we got up to take our place in the line. I had bought a book at the small store in the airport, about two Yukon trappers, so I had something to read on the plane - all our other books had been locked away in our suitcases.

In theory everything looked like it had gone smoothly. The

lad behind the check-in counter weighed all three bags and asked if we had paid extra for the extra bag. I think so, Andrew replied. I remember discussing this option when we originally booked the flights in February (you only get one bag free on the flight we had booked into) and I think I remember Andrew





organising this on the computer some months ago, but we couldn't find the email to confirm this. Not to worry,



the lad said. All good - the bags went off to where-ever they go off to and all we had to do was wait for the (slightly overdue) flight. Waiting for the flight wasn't in the end, the longest wait of the day

The flight, when it did depart slightly late, was essentially uneventful. And apart from the sudden jolting stop at the end of the runway at Calgary it was the smoothest landing that we had had so far on the trip. However.....

Losing our way in the large airport we ended up walking quite a bit further than we initially needed to to get to the baggage pick up area from our flight from Whitehorse. Given all the baggage handling issues (worldwide, not just here, for the past few months) however, the flight had to wait only a medium amount of time for the bags to come circling the turnstile. Except for ours! And bags

belonging to three other groups! After three hours all four groups were still waiting!

In the end we don't know what happened (there were several possible explanations going around) but all four groups (including us) didn't get their baggage this night. All four groups had checked their baggage in to Whitehorse around three hours earlier than the flight (rather than the recommended two hours). We all put in claims. We were okay, as we had a couple of days in town before moving on. However, one couple were flying out the next morning! Frustrated and getting hungry we finally went outside to wait for the hotel shuttle bus (and I lost one of my new earrings pulling my mask off!). It clearly hadn't been a good end to the day.



Waiting for the hotel shuttle

On the plus side it was close to 30 degrees Celsius when we arrived in Calgary. We have finally found Summer! On the minus - we were very hungry, it was late, and we didn't know when we were going to get our luggage. Welcome to international (or in this case, domestic) travel! Welcome to Alberta!



Our room: Acclaim Airport Hotel, Calgary