

Christmas, 2016

Well, it's that time of year, again! Jennie & I would like to wish you a very

Merry Christmas

After a mild winter on Vancouver Island, we left our rented condo in Parksville Feb 15 and headed north. We spent 2 rainy weeks at Salmon Point RV Park, half-way between Campbell River and Courtenay/Comox, then a month just south of Sidney on the Saanich peninsula. The weather started to warm up and we really enjoyed exploring the area especially the town of Sidney.

On April 20, we were on the ferry bound for Vancouver and the start of a five-month odyssey to the east coast. You can see the entire trip at www.tusker-international.com/blog.html, or please, keep reading.

Our route took us south into the U.S then east to Coeur d'Alene, ID. We enjoyed 9 days there – such a pretty place. We visited Yellowstone National Park on the way to the Black Hills of South Dakota. We marvelled at Yellowstone's wildlife and spectacular scenery.



The Devils Tower, Mount Rushmore, the Needles highway were just some of the amazing sights we saw in picturesque South Dakota. We definitely want to visit again!



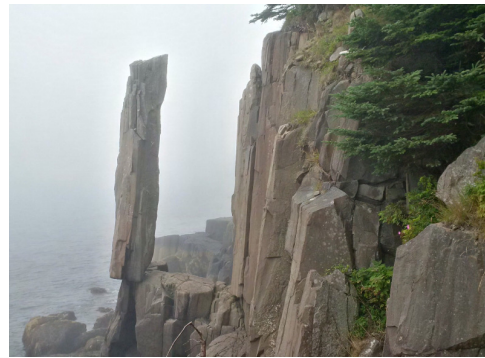
We continued east and then up the west coast of Lake Michigan to Sault Ste Marie and back into Canada. We

travelled through Ontario, including a ferry ride across Georgian Bay, into Quebec. We toured the eastern townships and continued on to Gaspésie. We were very lucky with the weather and the drive along the Gaspésie coast was spectacular. The majestic St. Lawrence river is like an ocean; it is so wide.



After a few days on the coast of New Brunswick, we crossed the 12.9 km (8 mi) Confederation Bridge to PEI. We met some interesting locals and continued to enjoy fine weather. After 7 days of sight-seeing, a short, very early morning (05:00) ferry ride saw us arrive in Nova Scotia. We spent a week in and around Halifax, then ventured out onto Digby Neck for a few days where we saw this “balancing rock.” Quite remarkable!

Then, we spent 4 delightful days back in Conquerall Bank, catching up with our old neighbours, friends, and kids. It was really great to see everyone. All too soon, we were on our way into Maine and the north-east USA. Yea-ah! Cheap gas again!



The coast of Maine was very pretty—we visited the eastern most point of the USA—but along Hwy 1, very busy. And as we continued south, things just got busier; such a mass of humanity on the east coast.



We stayed about an hour west of Boston for a few days. The day we picked to drive into the city the temperature reached 38.6°C (101°F) in brilliant sunshine with high humidity—phew!

After Boston we decided to avoid the east-coast congestion so we headed inland, through the Delaware Water Gap, to Gettysburg, PA. A visit to the museum and a tour of the battleground left us in awe. So many young men lost and so many monuments on the battlefields; it was almost too much.



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Our next stop was Bethesda, MD. The weather continued to be extremely hot which limited our daily "tours" but we did make it to the Mall in Washington, DC. We visited the Vietnam and Korean war memorials, the Lincoln and Jefferson memorials. Jen also visited Arlington National Cemetery and found the grave of a US relative of hers.



After a lovely 4-day visit, we drove westward; we'd had enough of the hustle and bustle. Across the great plains of the central states we drove dodging ominous black clouds. After climbing ever so slightly for a few days, we reached outskirts of the mile-high city of Denver.

We stopped in Loveland, CO just north of Denver and spent a fantastic day being chauffeured around Rocky Mountain National Park. The park entrance is at 8,242' and we took a single-lane, 9-mile gravel road to the Visitors' Center at 11,796' and the paved highway back to Estes Park. Highly recommended!



Then it was through the mountains of Idaho, Washington state and back into BC at Osoyoos at the south end of the Okanagan Valley. A day later, there was a (minor) earthquake in Oliver, about 20 miles north-east. Welcome back to BC!

After 3 days, we motored north through the incredibly busy Okanagan Valley, then up the Yellowhead Highway to my old chum Colin's place just outside of 100 Mile House. It was really nice to catch up.

A couple of days later, we headed south through the Fraser Canyon (one of our favourite drives) to the lower mainland (Vancouver) and BC Ferries back "home" to Vancouver Island on Sep 17.

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In 151 days, we covered 14,714 miles (23,823 kms). We ticked quite a few items off our “must-see” list, met many locals, made some new friends, and touched base with old friends; for that we are very appreciative.

On Nov 1, we drove south to our winter "home" at Pedder Bay RV Park & Marina just west of Victoria where we're staying for 4 months. Then next spring, we'll be off again.



In closing, Jennie & I would like to wish you a very

