

Jul 20-22 – To Cranbrook, BC

Last night it sure looked like we were in for a storm.

But it's Friday morning. Time to head to Cranbrook.

We've had a pleasant time the last couple of days exploring a bit of Invermere. Arrowhead Brewery had some fine brews, some of the best we've tasted this trip. And of course, Kickinghorse Coffee and its café was really pleasant too. They now sell a "light" coffee that we will have to try.

Invermere is located on either side of the Columbia River and to get from one side to the other means driving down the river valley and back up the other side. I think I would find this a bit tedious but that's just my visitor's opinion.

The "old" town is quite picturesque.



On the way south we drove beside Columbia Lake. Boy it was windy. Nothing like dragging the rig right into the wind; that's driving by the gas gauge!

At a roadside viewpoint, we read this interesting board. (Zoom in to read the text).



Before the 1880's . . .

Before the 1880's frequent low-intensity fires, by burning off or "pruning" the mainstem grasslands.

Fire Nation people fires to improve growing conditions and to enhance berry yields which provided a secure source of meat, berries and roots.

"On their level surface, under a gallop, in all many directions, I traced the forest from underneath."

Journals, Capt. John Palmer, 1858

Alteration of the Fire Cycle 1880's - 1990's

Over the last century, suppression of natural and aboriginal fires and more recently climate change has led to the current conditions in forest health.

- Ingrowth of smaller but forests
- Reduction in the diversity of wildlife habitat
- Loss of plant and animal species
- Wildfires due to fuel build-up

These include the Great Horned Owl, Changing habitat threatens many species of plants and animals. The agricultural industry is also affected by these changes with the loss of range for cattle grazing.

The province's most vulnerable species, high public safety hazards. Extreme ecological and property damage can result from wildfires.

Towards Restoration of Fire-maintained Ecosystems

Ecosystem Restoration in the Rocky Mountains region

Here at Columbia Lake an initiative is underway to restore open forests and grassland ecosystems. Selective harvesting and thinning of growing stands allows for the use of low-intensity burns for ecosystem restoration.

A little further down the road we pulled off the highway and into Canal Flats. Missed the coffee shop we were looking for but found this nice little park. Definitely time for morning coffee.

A short distance later, we pulled into the Wasa Rest Area and had a look around. One of the signs asked you to limit your stay to 8 hours. Definitely a possibility to overnight if we had to. Flush toilets too. Nice.



At Fort Steele, we parked the rig at the Heritage Town, wandered into the café and had a bite of lunch – homemade chili. Definitely thick and tasty.

The gift shop had a few interesting items. I particularly liked this stuffed engine with its animal passengers.

We pulled into Cranbrook and the Regency RV Park on the east side of town. We'd booked in for 2 nights but decided to stay an extra day.

I looked online at the Things to do in Cranbrook. Unfortunately it doesn't look like there is anything that we are interested in doing here. So we are just going to relax and take it easy for the weekend.

Sunday evening I checked the weather forecast for areas in the Kootenays that we want to visit. The good news is...the sun will continue to shine. The bad news is...the temperature is slowly going to rise, into the mid to high 30s. We really want to camp in the provincial parks and not the RV parks, but the way the temperatures is going, doing so could be brutal. Executive decision: We decided to head for the Island and home.

Monday morning we head west towards Creston and beyond. Join us later to see where we end up.

