

Driving the Icefields Parkway

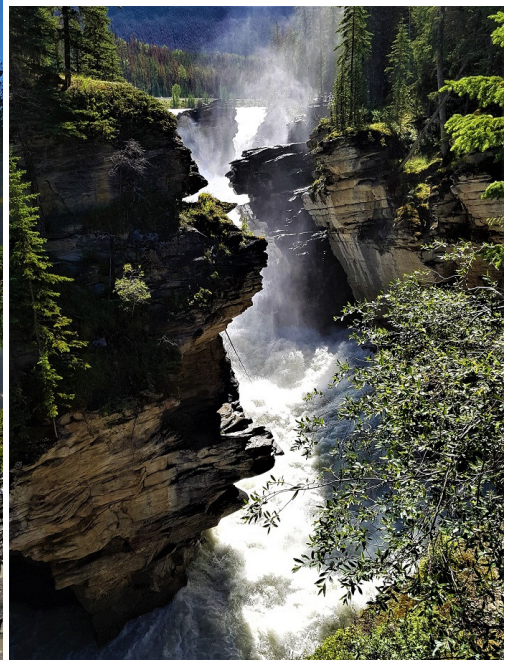
Well, today (Sunday July 15) was going to be an eventful day...in more ways than one. We knew the drive to Lake Louise was going to present some fantastic views. What we didn't know was...well, just enjoy the pictures for now.

We headed west towards Jasper then turned south onto Hwy 93, the Icefields Parkway. The mountains are starting to look pretty good.

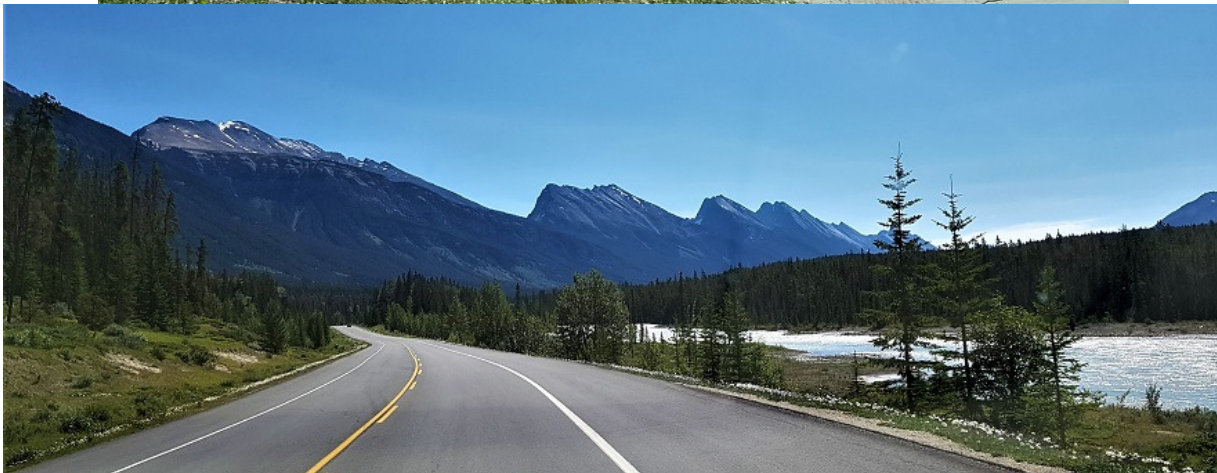


If you look closely at the picture above, you can see the effects of the Mountain Pine beetle. It is unfortunate that this pest wasn't stopped years ago when it was just a small outbreak in BC. In fact, there was an on-line article just a few days ago about the concern of all the dead trees in Jasper National Park. It is very sad to see what was once lush green forests decimated by this tiny little critter.

We stopped at Athabasca Falls and had a look around, just as a tour bus pulled up. I managed to take some pics and a video before we were inundated.



Okay, back on the road, we were amazed at what we were seeing. The mountains look surreal.



We drove past the Glacier Skywalk. We were surprised that it was right on the side of the highway. The on-line reviews of this attraction were less than exciting, so we decided to give it a pass.

Just a short distance from the Icefields Centre, I glanced down at the brake controller – this device activates the trailer brakes when I step on the brake pedal of the van. It was flashing **RED**. The display read: Short in (trailer) brake circuit....**NO BRAKES**.

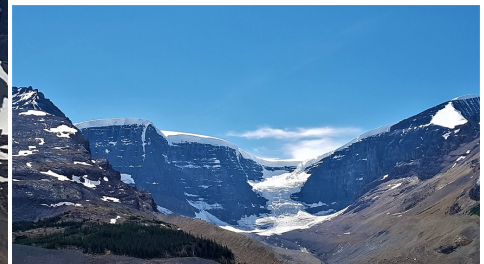
Holy you know what!!! I found a place to pull off the highway to assess the situation. Jen mentioned that the Icefields Centre was just around the bend (hidden by a rock outcropping). So a couple of minutes later we were safely in the RV parking lot at the Centre.

Boy, of all the things to go wrong and all the times they could have, we were really lucky that this happened when it did. But what to do next?!

I walked into the Icefields Centre, found the Parks Canada desk and asked if they could help. They suggested I call the AMA (Alberta Motor Assoc. – Alberta's BCAA). Long story short, after a lot of waiting and much discussion, we decided to overnight (permitted) at the Centre and have Ali towed into Banff the next day.



The views were spectacular from the Centre.

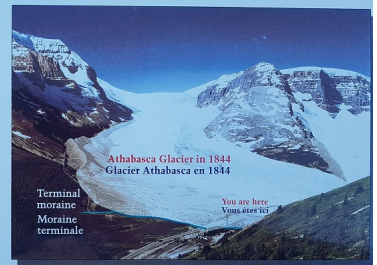


That evening we met our neighbours, Trevor and Marie, from Melbourne, OZ. Trevor's background is in electronics, so he suggested a number of things to try. Nothing worked so we said "Good night", went for a stroll, then hopped into bed. Here's Jen checking out the wildlife on our stroll!



Terminal Moraine

In 1844 the Athabasca Glacier covered the entire area where the parking lot is today. This terminal moraine – the large gravel pile which passes under the boardwalk – was formed by the glacier when it paused here before it began to shrink to its current location. Through the centuries, changes in world climate have caused glaciers to expand and shrink as the balance between snowfall and icemelt shifts.



The next morning, bright and early, I called the tow company. Around 11 a.m., Mitch arrived with his flat bed truck. He hooked Ali onto the back of his truck – no problem for his truck to tow Ali with no brakes (we were relieved because we remembered following the tow truck in Oregon with Ali way up on the flat bed – not a sight or situation we wanted to repeat).



Anyway, Mitch was great. He stopped at Saskatchewan Crossing and we pulled in to gas up. A DOLLAR NINETY-FOUR???! You must be joking!!

I quickly grabbed our 2 – 10 litre gas cans on the front of Ali and threw them in the back of the van. A DOLLAR NINETY-FOUR!! Highway blankety-blank robbery!

Mitch mentioned that he had to stop and pick up a car going to Canmore, so he would probably be about an hour behind us.

We took the opportunity to take the rest of the drive to Banff a little more slowly. We enjoyed Mother Nature's magnificence.





We drove to Banff Auto Services (whom I had called the day before), checked in with Tim the owner, then waited, fortunately in the shade, for Mitch and Ali to show up.

All the parks and campgrounds in and around Banff were full, so once we had Ali hooked up, we headed a short distance down the road to Canmore for the night.

All is good. We have power for the night....a shower is in the offing....after a drink of course.



Tuesday morning, bright and early, I headed back to Banff to have Alfie checked out. I had a couple of hours to kill, so I wandered around Banff and took some pictures.





Around 11 a.m., I went to get Alfie. Tim had checked the brake controller wiring, from stem to stern, and was certain everything was a-okay.

I called Jen and told her I was on my way back to Canmore. We packed up the rig and headed out for Invermere, BC.

Yea-uh, heading back to our home province. We'll see you tomorrow.