

# Port Angeles, WA – Halfway, OR

written by Marcus | 20 August, 2016



I always used to find it amusing that American films had to put Paris, France or London, England when captioning a location. To us it seems obvious where these places are but of course in the USA London could be any one of 5 different places in any one of 5 different states before even considering the original one across the pond. In our first 2 weeks in the States we'll be passing familiar sounding towns like Olympia, Aberdeen, Melbourne, Dundee and Monmouth. The early settlers clearly weren't the most imaginative people when it came to naming their towns.

## ***4th August – 20th August 2016***

At 5:45am we arrive at the ferry port in Victoria and after a bit of chit chat we're stamped, cleared through customs and a

man checks our tickets before allowing us on board. The ticket bar code reader makes a gunshot sound as if to say 'welcome to the home of the free and the land of the armed'.



### State #1 – Washington, The Evergreen State

A hearty breakfast awaits us in Port Angeles on the other side with pancakes, eggs and unlimited coffee being served up in a nearby cafe. This is a nation that knows how to kickstart a day. We then ride out alongside the sea on the Olympic Discovery trail, a dedicated traffic free path that we share with other cyclists and a few horses. The Olympic Peninsula is a particularly fitting place to be on the day that the greatest show on earth kicks off in Rio. Unfortunately we're not going to have much time to sit in front of a TV to watch much of the action from the games given the length of the road ahead and the limited time we've got to ride it.





Topical location

After a night in the Olympic Forest we continue down route 101 with the Puget Sound on our left shoulder and hills and trees



to our right. A sign for a distillery catches my eye and calls for a stop to investigate. Americans are very good at ruining whisky so it's with some trepidation that I accept a sample that the distiller proudly offers to us. Luckily he's been taught by a master distiller from Scotland and been given strict instructions to keep it simple and 'not add any extra rubbish'. The result is a fine tipple and we work our way through several other botanicals and aquavits just to make sure we've sampled the whole range. We leave with a bag of miniatures and decide it's probably time for some lunch rather than get back on the bike straight away.



Riding alongside the Puget Sound





Chuck at the Hardware Distillery, Hoodspport,WA

Once our heads have cleared we work our way south again and then turn onto the 108 away from the Puget but toward the Pacific. The roads are wide and busy but there's a good size shoulder for us to use so the traffic doesn't feel too intimidating. Being mid-summer and a weekend there seems to be plenty going on. There are yard sales on every block, marshals are out for a running race but we seem to miss the race itself. In Elma we find ourselves in the middle of a classic car show and while inspecting the immaculate vehicles someone asks us if we're part of the show too. The bike isn't quite up to concourse condition so we decide against setting up our own exhibit and continue on.



Elma car show





Elma Car Show exhibit

This region is noticeably more rundown than the smart towns we'd left behind in BC. There are trailer parks and beaten up pickups amongst small single storey wooden houses. Patriotism is high though and the stars and bars fly from every other garden. We've seen the first signs of the upcoming presidential election too, mostly in support of Trump. We'll be leaving the States just before the election itself which could be a good thing if this is any indication of the way the result may go.



Patriotic truck





Trump supporters. Keen on helping the disabled but not keen on cyclists.

In Raymond we get to enjoy a small festival where a local band is playing while kids are being towed in oil barrels on wheels behind an ATV. A good time is being had by all and the temptation is to spend longer in these places but with plenty of daylight left we prise ourselves away and wring out a few more miles. Despite there being plenty of open countryside around us, very little of it is suitable for camping being either too boggy, or fenced off. We resort to stopping at a campground but when we discover that the cost for 2 people and a tent is the same as that for an RV with 5 people we dispute their pricing policy. "We can soon fix that" the attendant tells us before snatching back the registration form and telling us in no uncertain terms to find somewhere else to stay. A little taken aback we follow his advice and find a nice patch of ground a bit further on that is occupied by a large RV. A quick chat to the occupants, Cindy and Randy and

we're given the all clear to make use of a quiet corner of their plot. It may lack the facilities of the campground but the much warmer welcome makes up for it.



Beautiful but too boggy for camping





Rose Ranch, WA

As we approach the coast we enter the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, a large area of wetland where we spot otters scampering across the huge mud flats. Then we arrive at the edge of the Pacific with 50km of sandy beach stretching off into the hazy distance, the adjacent town imaginatively being named Long Beach. We're now at the southern edge of Washington State and just need to cross the Columbia River to get into Oregon. It's a big river at this point as it's widening out into an estuary but the 6.5km long Megler bridge spans the crossing to the town of Astoria on the other side. There's no cycle lane and there's a vicious cross wind which calls for slow progress but we manage to stay upright and out of the water to roll down into our 2nd state.



Willapa National Wildlife Refuge





## Otters in the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge



Our first view of the Pacific from this side.



Crossing the Megler Bridge into Oregon





State #2 – Oregon, The Beaver State



Megler Bridge, Astoria, OR

Astoria has many claims to fame including being the setting for such classic films as *The Goonies*, *Free Willy 2*, *Short Circuit*, *Kindergarten Cop* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II: The Secret of the Ooze*. For us though its importance lies in the fact that it's the official start (or finish) for the TransAmerica Cycle route. The Adventure Cycling Association's original coast to coast epic route has seen cyclists leaving this point in increasing numbers over the last 40 years. It consists of 4300 miles of back roads, small towns, hills, mountains, parks, plains and prairies that take intrepid riders on a journey from one side of the country to the other. We expect a grand starting line commemorating this auspicious place and a crowd of people eagerly waiting to cheer off the next adventurous couple to take on the challenge. What we find instead is a large anchor on a quiet jetty with some ominous grey clouds gathering in the sky. There's no mention of the TransAm or even any clues as to



which direction we should be starting in. But perhaps this is more appropriate for something that is really just a personal adventure, a self-supported challenge that only those who have ridden it or have dreamed about riding it can fully understand. We snap a photo, swing our legs over the bike, clip in and begin pedalling.



At the start of the TransAmerica Trail

The Oregon coast is a beautiful place. Enormous beaches are only broken up by the occasional rocky outcrop and the road we're on stays within view of the water for most of the next 2 days while it rises up and down each headland. There are a couple of longer climbs, one with a tunnel part way up that includes a handy safety feature for cyclists. On the approach there's a button to press that activates some warning lights so that motorists know there's a bike up ahead. Given the number of huge RV's, trucks and careless holiday drivers anything like this to make the road a bit safer is very

welcome. At the highest point the best view on the entire coast is hidden from us by some thick sea mist giving us a good reason to come back here one day and ride the full length of the Pacific coast (another popular ACA route).



The beach at Seaside





Lewis and Clarke statue in Seaside. We'll be following in the footsteps of these two for much of our route.



Haystack rack. One Eyed Willy's ship wasn't sailing on this day.





Windswept houses in Seaside



Push the button and the lights flash so cars know there's a bike in the tunnel.





These two were enjoying riding the entire Pacific coast down to Mexico but I think she wasn't pedalling on the back.

Although the TransAm continues further down the coast we choose to turn inland at Tillamook and head towards Portland. But not before stopping at the famous Tillamook Cheese Factory. Something we really missed during our time in Asia was good cheese so to be in a part of the world that appreciates tasty dairy products again is a real treat.



Long vehicle. And a logging truck.





Tillamook cheese factory.





Cheese!

There's a climb up to 1550 feet through the Tillamook Forest Park and we seem to have left the holiday traffic behind so can enjoy the easy gradient in a bit more peace. Our destination for the day is Hillsboro just outside Portland, where we're greeted by Hal and Kat, our WarmShowers hosts and told to pitch the tent next to 'the ladies'. In the back garden we find that 'the ladies' are a small forest of marijuana plants standing seven feet tall and occupying a good portion of the available space. Oregon is one of the states that has legalised the drug so, within certain limits, smokers can happily cultivate plants for their own purposes and Hal has become something of an expert. He's also an expert witness for litigation cases involving cyclists which keeps him busy when he's not occupied by his horticultural activities. Accidents are almost always followed up by some form of court case to apportion the blame and Hal's expert judgement can help to decide who foots the bill. It's not always the driver



at fault either.







## Tillamook Forest Park



Enormous flag in Forest Grove



Camping with the 'ladies'





Hal and Kat our hosts in Hillsboro

Passing through Hillsboro the next day we stop off at the office of my former employer Hydro Intentional to say hello,



much to their surprise, before we make our way into the center of Portland. This is a city that has a reputation for being a hive of cycling activity and we're soon in amongst bike lanes filled with mothers on cargo bikes, hipsters on fixies and day to day commuters. Like Vancouver, the level of activity and general atmosphere makes it an attractive city and again it's one of the more sought after destinations in this part of the world.



Old Town Brewery Portland





Bike friendly Portland

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Chicken salad with mayo, celery, onions, and carrots on a whole wheat bun.

**MARINATED GRILLED CHICKEN SANDWICH** \$6  
Marinated chicken breast, grilled to perfection, served on a whole wheat bun.

**GRILLED CHICKEN SALAD** \$6  
Marinated grilled chicken breast, served with our signature dressing and your choice of lettuce, tomato, or avocado on a whole wheat bun.

**SLICE OF CHICKEN POT PIE** \$6  
Chicken pot pie with a flaky crust, served on a whole wheat bun.

**TOP BAY SANDWICH WITH YOUR CHOICE OF:**  
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ADD BACON \$1 ADD KOSHER PIMENTO CHEESE \$1

**ESCH SANDWICH COMES WITH DIPS**

**SUBSTITUTE FRIES FOR \$1**



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Portland also has plenty of food carts



The Cheezus. A burger with toasted cheese sandwiches instead of buns. We'll burn off the calories in no time.



There are loads of bike shops so our mission to find some new tyres ought to be simple but the fickle nature of the bike industry has thrown a spanner in the works. Once again our 'industry standard' 26" wheels are now not as standard as we thought. Over the course of the last few years 29" and 27.5" wheels have become more popular to the extent that even here in Portland few shops stock the 26" tyres we need. Eventually a small shop in the suburbs comes to our rescue and the friendly mechanic in Joe Bike wrestles a brand new Schwalbe Marathon onto our rear wheel for us. Wheels and tyres have been our biggest headache during the trip so far and it seems even here our worries are far from over.



### Joe Bike in Portland to the rescue

The extended tyre search means it's too late to get clear of the city limits so we find a riverside park to hide in for the night. However we're discovered not by the police but by Hein, a keen cyclist who spots the loaded tandem and comes over for



a chat. He's apologetic that he can't offer us a bed for the night which is fine as we're happy to make use of the park. But to make up for it he returns a bit later armed with wine and snacks which we gratefully accept in return for an evening chatting about our travels. After the 'American war', he and his family escaped from their home in Vietnam and landed here in America where he's lived ever since. We encourage him to take his bike back to south east Asia as we're pretty sure he'll be amazed by how much has changed since he left.



Hein, our generous wine supplier in Portland

Americans are certainly the most forward nation of people we've met. After climbing out of Portland we stop for a picnic



and Jackie approaches us, curious about our bike. Before long she's pouring out her heart while we nod and smile with typical British awkwardness. Two cultures divided by a common language as the saying goes. She seems to draw some inspiration when we tell her about our trip and we wish her luck in finding her own adventure.



Riding south of Portland

The day heats up and we discover that it costs 99¢ for an iced soda regardless of the size of the cup in most gas stations so of course we go for the largest. A 60oz hit of freezing cold, sugar-loaded fizzy drink really hits the spot though the size of the cup is really quite ridiculous.

The farmers are making good use of the sunshine with 7 combine harvesters working an enormous field. We pass hazelnut orchards and stop for fresh peaches. The air is full of sweet smells when the road takes us past a peppermint distillery.

Then as the day begins to draw to a close we spot a big sign for the Polk County Fair and Rodeo. We shrug and decide it's probably worth a look. The wholesome evening's entertainment includes tough guys hanging onto violent bulls, tough cowgirls racing round barrels and tough kids clinging onto charging sheep. The latter, known as mutton bustin' provides the best spectacle by far. We decide to pass on the offer of paying a dollar for a photo with a cardboard cutout of Trump and ride into the dark to find a quiet park to camp in nearby Monmouth.



Industrial scale farming





Fresh and tasty peaches

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*Cherriots*  
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## The Rough Stock Rodeo



Buckin' Horse



Hold on tight!





Mutton Bustin'





The champion's technique was to ride the sheep backwards

We skirt round Eugene to rejoin the official TransAm route and begin heading up the McKenzie Valley following the beautiful crystal clear river with the occasional covered bridge crossing over it. This is the start of our first proper climb and the road picks up a few notches on the gradient scale as the view ahead becomes filled with the Cascade mountain range. We winch up through the forest then the trees suddenly give way to a mass of jagged black pumice. We're passing through an enormous lava field laid down 1500 years ago when the nearby Belknap Crater blew its top. Around us are the peaks of Mount Washington, Mount Jefferson and, peeping out from 86 miles away, Mount Hood. We crest the summit of the McKenzie Pass at 5335 feet then dive down to the quaint little town of Sisters.



Goodpasture Covered Bridge



Goodpasture covered bridge over the McKenzie River





Sisters Mountains





Riding up through the lava fields on McKenzie Pass





Feeding the chipmunks





## Belknap Crater





## Mount Washington



### Summit of McKenzie Pass

The difference from one side of the mountains to the other is huge. The lush greens of douglas firs have been replaced by arid browns and sparse lodgepole pines. The fertile arable fields are now dry prairie with cows nibbling at the tough desert foliage. Huge irrigation rigs are trying their best to make the ground more usable. In a riverside park we set up camp on some suspiciously healthy grass only to find out why it's so green when the automatic sprinklers hose down the tent at 2 in the morning.



Descending into Sisters





Cattle ranch

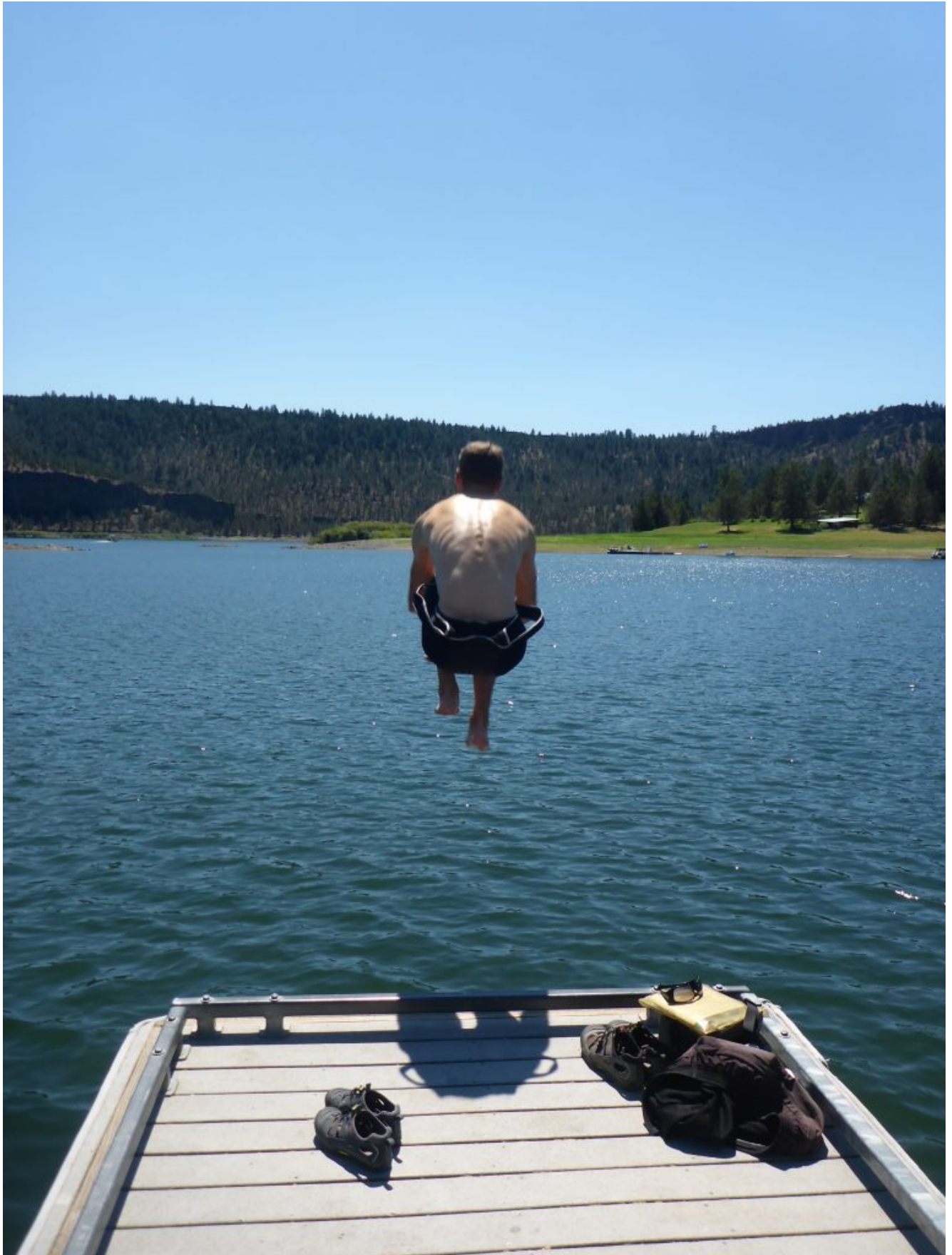


Steve, who finished the TransAm recently and kindly stopped to buy us a coffee

It's a landscape that holds its own kind of beauty though. A hot sweaty climb takes us through more woods that have recently been ravaged by wild fires over to Mitchell where we glimpse the edges of the painted hills with their bands of orange, yellow and green etched into the rocks. An art project that has taken millennia to form. Mitchell is a tiny town that would be easy to pass by, but a big barrel of water by the roadside accompanied by a sign welcoming cyclists makes sure that we stop. The barrel sits outside a white weatherboard church that has been turned into a hostel for cyclists and inside we find rows of comfy looking bunk beds and Elaine wearing a big smile. She offers us a shower and dinner which seals the deal that we'll be staying the night. Jalet bought the church last year and after a winter of renovation began taking in passing travellers. They hope that money raised from donations will help to pay for a full time pastor for the



town. A neat solution to help both the town and those passing through.



Cooling off in Ochoco Reservoir







On our way into Mitchell



The Spoke'n Hostel, Mitchell





Mitchell locals who told us the road would 'go up for a long stretch and then get kinda crooked.'



### The long climb out of Mitchell

The TransAm is full of nice surprises like that. We sleep in another church the following night in Dayville that has been hosting cyclists since the 70's. Hundreds of people have made use of its floor space and tonight there are 3 more to add to the list of guests. We're joined by Chris whose story would make for a good episode of Jerry Springer. After a complicated relationship with his wife, children and the father of his wife's other children came to an end he took off on a Walmart bike from new Jersey and pointed his front wheel in the direction of Seattle. Along the way he's acquired a trailer and tent, given by sympathetic folk he'd met. It's not been an easy journey but he's into the final stretch now so it looks like he'll soon be making his fresh start in a brand new town and can pursue his goal of finding his 'true love' (although he seems to have eyes for Kirsty and then for her stoker's seat after I let him have a ride on the back of the tandem).





Bedding down in Dayville Presbyterian Church



Horsehoe cross in Dayville Presbyterian Church





Chris heading West again





Dayville Post Office





Dayville olde stores



Wild country



Ranch outside Dayville

The mercury is over 40°C during the day now so any rare chance to find shade is taken. This is rugged, wild west countryside and the map is full of evocative names like Rattlesnake Creek, Smoky Boulder Road, Big Lookout Mountain and Hell's Canyon. The people we meet 'sure do like our accent' with the way we say the word water (wor-ter instead of wah-da) being a particular favourite. "It sounds way cooler the way y'all say it! Which part of Australia are you from?". In the distance massive plumes of smoke are pouring up into the air. We later learn that close to 30,000 acres of wilderness are currently on fire, started from a lightning strike and an annual occurrence in this area. It's been burning for a week and has been growing by the day.



41.7°C





Grabbing rest in the shade where we can



Thank the irrigators too





## Wildfire near Prairie City



### Wildfire at Sunset

Outside the grocery store In Prairie City we bump into a chap called Chuck who turns out to be a bit of a local character. His life story includes fighting in the Korean war, learning to diffuse bombs in the Philippines, being a property mogul and his current occupation is as the owner of several gold mines. Unprompted he tells us how he believes Trump should build the wall across the Mexican border and that he believes only Fox news is telling the truth. It's a story that we couldn't have made up, but we suspect Chuck might have exaggerate some of the finer points. I guess our story is no less bizarre as we set up the tent in a quiet corner of a cemetery for the night.



Prairie City Mural





Chuck: soldier, real estate tycoon, gold miner, local legend  
While we ride up and down several hills on our way to Baker City we pass clumps of deserted houses, ghost towns that

haven't survived after the local gold mines ran out of the shiny stuff. Baker City offers a nugget for us as we pick up two new tyres from Falstaff Cycles and a bucket of fried chicken.

These hills must have been full of promise in those early days but couldn't support the huge increase in population for long. Our route follows several historically significant trails including the path led by Lewis and Clarke when they set out to explore the unclaimed lands in the West. The famous Oregon Trail that carried thousands of hopeful prospectors and settlers into these new lands in the mid 1800's runs over the hills near Baker City and we stop to take a look at the still visible waggon tracks.



Covered waggon with views to the Strawberry Mountains





Cattle ranch near Baker City



Original waggon tracks of the Oregon Trail





Modern day Oregon Trail carrying RVs into the 'new territories'



Road down into the desert after Baker City





Another casualty of the heat



Grocery store ornaments in Richland

The amount of open and apparently unused space gives the impression that most of this land is still unclaimed but a closer look reveals that it is fenced and the No Trespassing signs warn off even the stealthiest of campers. We're now nearing the edge of Oregon and spend our last night in Halfway. A town whose name has no bearing on how much more of the TransAm we still have to ride, which is plenty more than half. Oregon has been a state with plenty of contrast. To think that only a few days ago we were wrapping up against the cold sea mist, then up through rain forests and over snow topped mountains to arrive in a baking desert with parched and burning wilderness. Already the TransAm has been full of surprises. Next we've got the hot rocks of Hells Canyon to negotiate before we cross into Idaho whose first town will be Cambridge. Now there's another name that sounds familiar...



Climb before Halfway





Halfway by name but not by nature



Halfway Church

There are plenty more photos in the USA Gallery.

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# 12 Photos from the last 12 Months

written by Marcus | 20 August, 2016



It's our anniversary today, exactly two years since we left Bristol and started pedalling. What a great day that was riding out to Bath with a bunch of our friends. Since then those friends have had engagements, weddings, babies, bought houses, changed jobs and yet all we've done is keep on pedalling. It's been a simple year in many respects.



Those pedals have taken us from Leh, deep in the Indian Himalaya most of the way over to a little town called Mitchell in Oregon in the wild west of the United States, where we are today. Two very different parts of world but both have been full of equally welcoming people. A lot of road has passed under our tyres in the meantime so here are a few of our favourite photos of places and faces from the journey that's taken us from there to here.

**August 2015**





Tara nearing the top of the Kunzum La, Himachal, India  
*September 2015*



Shimla knitting group, India

***October 2015***



Sunrise over Pokhara, Nepal

***November 2015***





Don Bosco Olympic Opening Ceremony, Silchar, India  
***December 2015***





Our hosts in Taungoo, Myanmar

***January 2016***





Bayon Temple, Siem Reap, Cambodia

***February 2016***



Mỹ Đức, Vietnam

***March 2016***





Chicken or duck? China

***April 2016***



High fives on the Pyongyang Marathon, North Korea  
**May 2016**





Touring bike guardian, Jeju, South Korea

***June 2016***







Ancient history and modern convenience in Japan

*July 2016*



Kayaking near Deep Cove, British Columbia, Canada

I'm a bit behind with the blog so bear with me. There's another episode to finish up our time in Japan to come shortly then I can get stuck in to our trip through Canada and the US which is moving on at pace. You can always keep an eye on the where are we page for a better idea of where we've got to.

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# Vancouver to Victoria

written by Marcus | 20 August, 2016





## **19th July – 3rd August 2016**

So we've crossed a few borders over the last 2 years and almost without exception they've all gone smoothly. Getting into Azerbaijan took a while but they gave us tea and Snickers while we waited. Getting out of Uzbekistan was delayed when they asked for registration slips from hotels for each night of our stay, luckily an unenforceable rule that just required us to smile and shake our heads until they let us through. Other than that it's hardly taken a few minutes to get into the next country.

We imagined that getting into Canada would be another straightforward process, we're coming into the Commonwealth after all. The trouble is when your answer to "What's your current line of employment?" Is "unemployed cyclist" and "when did you last have a job?" Is "2014" it triggers certain alarm bells with the immigration officer. We'd left Hokkaido at 1:30pm and it's now 8pm on the same day. In between we've had a 3 hour flight to Shanghai, sat there for 8 hours then taken another 10 hour flight to Vancouver. Suffice to say we're exhausted, confused, hungry and just want to pedal the few km to our Warmshowers host and sleep. Do we really look like we're here to cause trouble? Actually my beard has grown a bit unruly.

Instead we're directed into a room of despondent looking Chinese and South East Asian travellers where we wait our turn for further investigations. After 90 minutes we're finally called forward and the officer takes one look at our bike and asks where we've been and where we're headed. "Sounds like quite a trip, keep safe as Canadian drivers are terrible" is as much as he has to say before sending us on our way. Finally we can get rolling on the North American leg of our journey but it's a good job they didn't find our contraband dairy and meat products.



Beautiful BC, but bad drivers apparently



Colourful cement plant

We spend two days with Ian and Lis in the suburbs of



Vancouver. They weren't fussed about our eventual very late arrival and offer us our own room where we can rest and sort ourselves out. Somehow barely sleeping on the plane has allowed me to slip into the new time zone, 16hrs behind Japan, fairly easily. Kirsty isn't so lucky and feels dreadful during daylight and wide awake at night. While she adapts I wonder around the city to see what makes it the best place to live in North America.



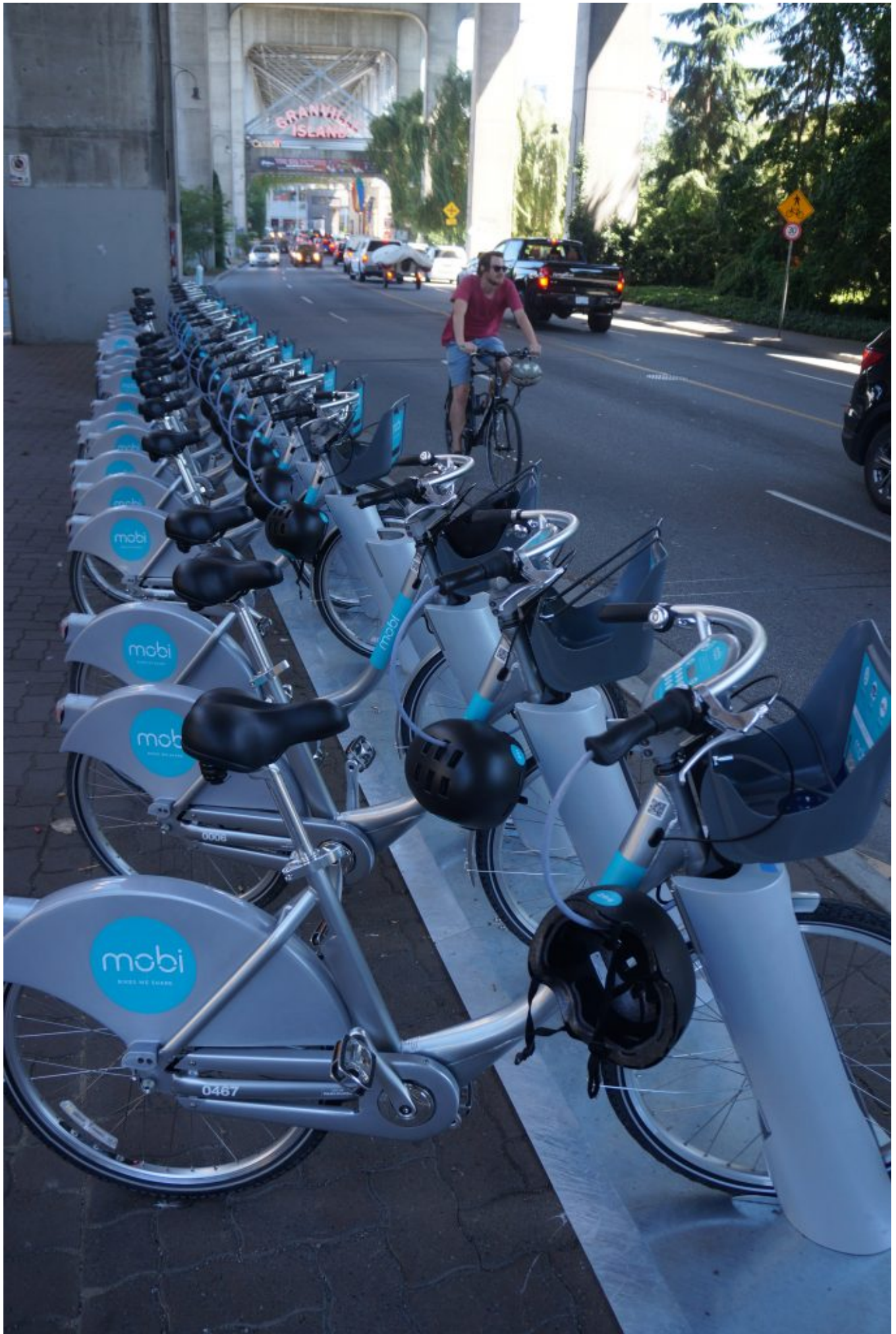
View of Downtown Vancouver from Queen Elizabeth Park

Although seeing it in the sunshine definitely helps, and is a rare thing apparently, there's a great feeling about the place. The mountainous backdrop to the downtown skyline makes it clear that when you live here the great outdoors is on your doorstep. In the city itself there are bikes everywhere and a brand new public bike service opens up on the day that we arrive to encourage even more people to get around on two wheels.



Mountains, beaches and a modern city. What's not to like?





## City bikes

Vancouver is also famous for its food and walking around I spot Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Greek, Indian and Turkish restaurants in one small area alone. There's no need to travel the world when you can taste it all here. The faces are multicultural too, much more than I expected, with communities from all parts of the world to match the cuisine.



Punjabi Market, Vancouver





Fruit stall on Granville Island





Even the phones love living here

Most big cities we've been to have been interesting but not immediately appealing as a place to live. Vancouver has something different about it though and is probably the first place that, if push came to shove, would be a possibility as somewhere to stay longer.

To mark our arrival on a new continent I treat myself to a trim that is more severe than I would have liked. This has the benefit of making me look less like a Sasquatch and so less likely to be captured by a trophy hunter.





Before trim



After trim

After a couple of days Kirsty is slowly becoming conscious at the correct times so we decide to try getting going on the



bike. We're heading east again, out of the city and into its numerous and familiarly named districts of Richmond, New Westminster, Surrey all making us feel like we're crossing London.



Ian, our host in Vancouver

Arriving in Japan is a big culture shock for most people flying in from the West but we'd approached it gradually so,



although we had to get used to its more unique quirks it didn't seem quite so strange. It's more of a shock for us arriving here in Canada after so long in Asia. The tiny box cars have been replaced by enormous v8 pick ups. Houses are huge wooden bungalows surrounded by acres of lawn. There's so much space! At one point a train comes past and 15 minutes later it's still coming past. I give up counting somewhere around the 180th carriage.

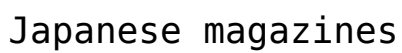


Japanese Car Park



Canadian car park









Canadian magazines

One of our problems shopping in Japan was finding things in big enough quantities. Porridge oats (if we could find them at



all) were sold in 300g bags that lasted 2 days. Here it's hard to buy anything in less than 3kg bags. The smallest bag of crisps (sorry, potato chips) are 4 times the size of the largest Japanese equivalent. Milk is sold by the gallon which isn't much help when we only want a pint.



Sorry Kirsty but it's too big and too heavy

It's a nice change being able to read labels and signs and have conversations with people though. At a stop at a 7 11,



which is one thing Canada does have in common with Japan, we get chatting to three different people and can actually answer their many questions. Translating from English to Canadian is very simple and just requires the addition of 'eh?' to the end of each sentence.



This chap had built his own bamboo bike as an 'art project'





## Frazer River

We follow the Frazer valley out through Maple Ridge and Abbotsford and end the day in Chilliwack at the home of Ant and Rita. It's been fantastic making new friends all along our route but it's even better catching up with old ones, and I've known Ant nearly as long as I've known my own parents. We went to the same school at the age of 4 and have kept in touch ever since even though the distance between us grew substantially when he moved here 10 years ago. This is the first time I've had a chance to visit so there's plenty of reminiscing to be done, no doubt boring our respective wives with tales of our irresponsible antics in the days of our youth. They have an adventure playground on their doorstep in the form of mountains and lakes and a garage full of toys to help them enjoy it to the full so I don't think Ant will be returning to Gloucestershire anytime soon.

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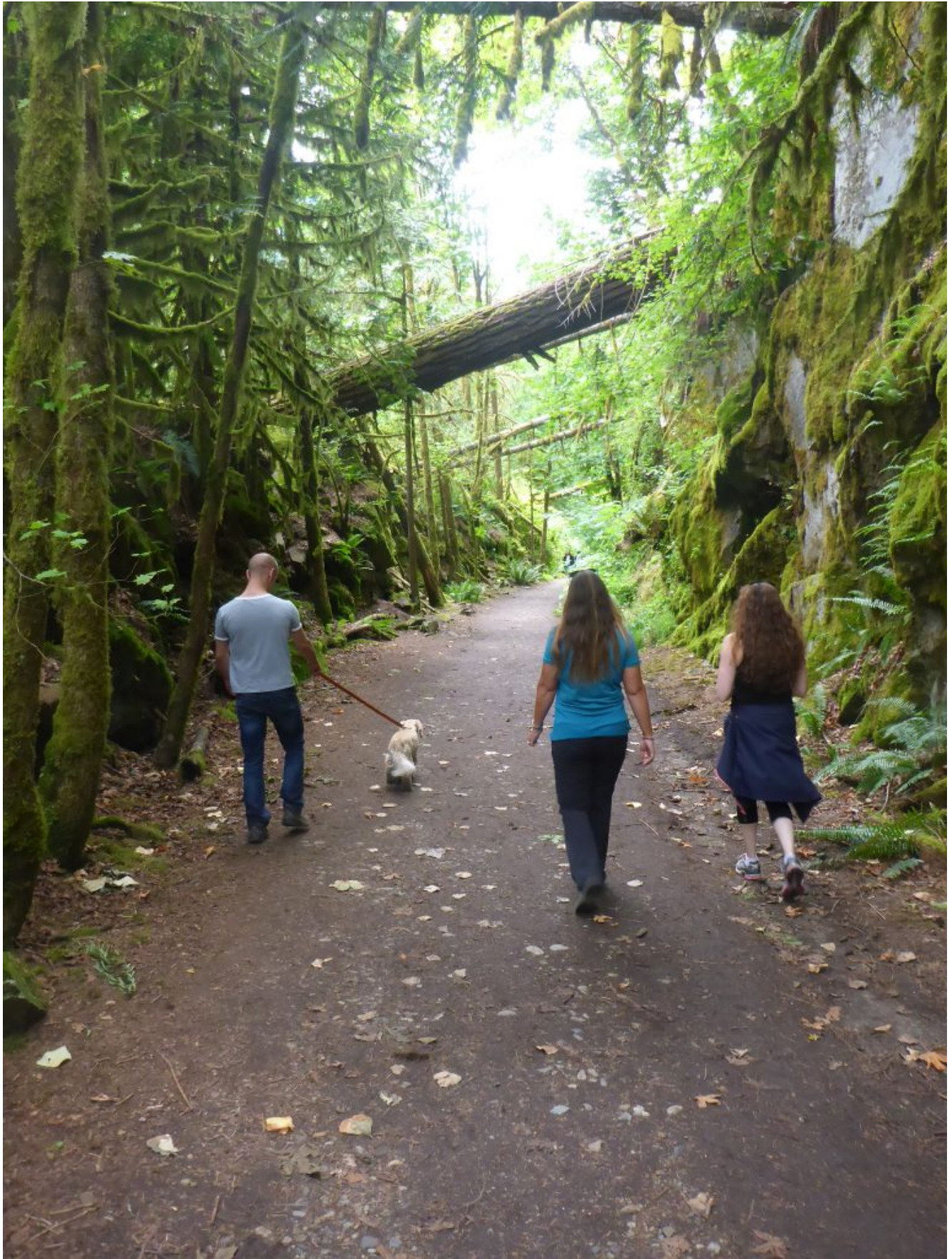


Ant, Rita and Kayla outside the finest German auto specialist  
garage in the Frazer Valley –  
<http://www.hoodstarautomotive.com>



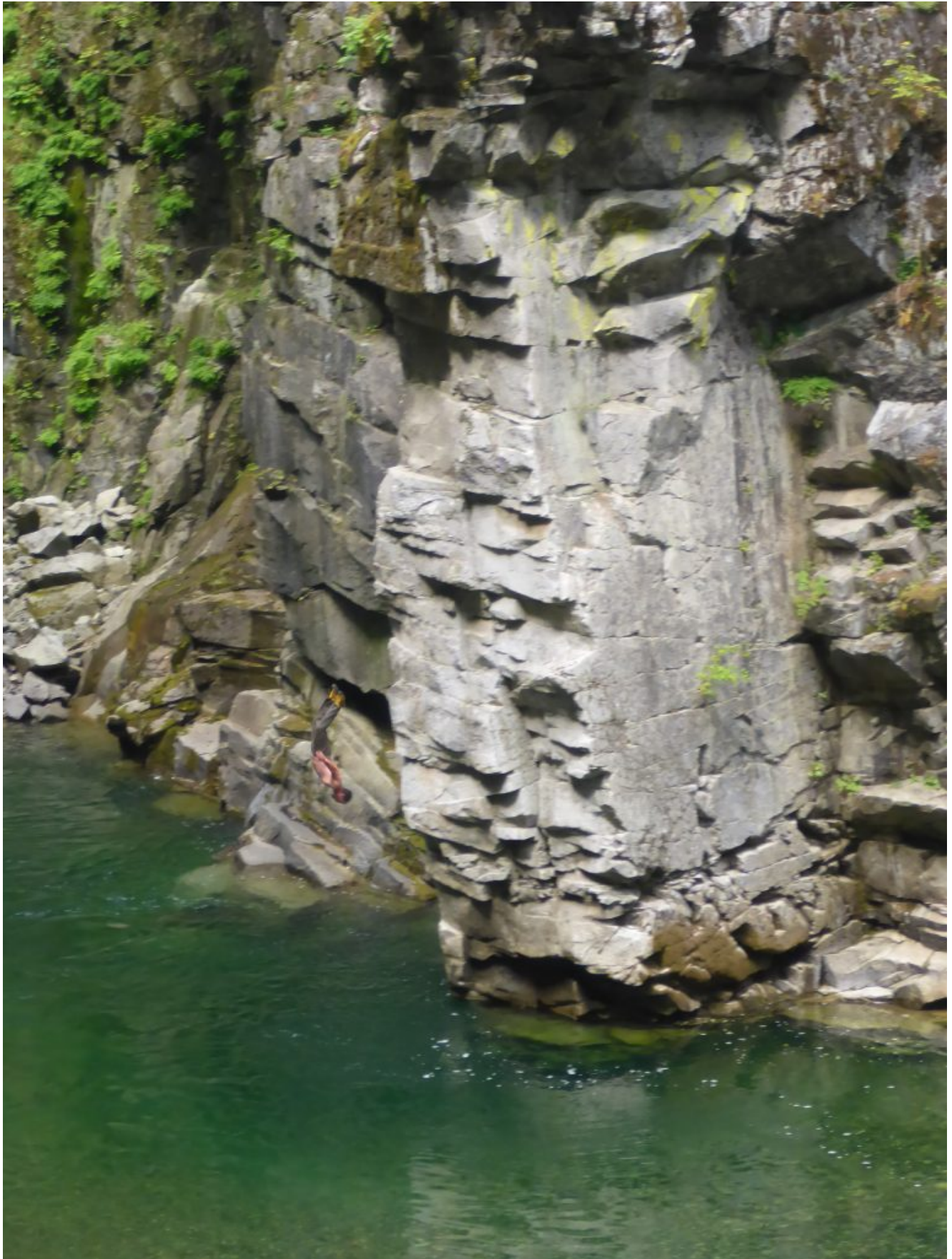
View of Chilliwack





A walk near Hope





Free climber taking a dive, near Hope. Ant was going to have a go too but forgot his trunks.



Toy cupboard





Rita tries out the stoker seat



## Friends Reunited

Through the wonders of Facetime we manage to catch up with another old friend, also an Anthony, back in Eastbourne for a reunion that is long overdue, even if it's only in cyberspace. The three of us comprise a mechanic with his own business, an opera singer and a cycling nomad. It's amazing the different directions our lives have followed from a shared childhood. The weekend goes all too quick though and soon it's time for Ant and Rita to return to work and for us to return to being unemployed cyclists.





Chilliwack is famous for its corn. None today though.

Retracing our tyre tracks to Maple Ridge we then turn up towards Belcarra after Port Moody. We're aiming for Deep Cove

as we've been invited to stay with Tara's sister, Kirsten, and her family. Tara was our riding buddy in North West India and South Korea.



One of the best sunsets of the whole trip while camping at Whonnock lake

Deep Cove sits on the 'North Shore' on the other side of a stretch of water from the bulk of the city. It's also near the mouth of the Indian Arm, a fjord that stretches north of Vancouver and then comes down to join the Howe Sound before flowing out to sea. All this water makes it a fantastic location but makes it tricky for us to get to it. By road we'd have to go back into Vancouver, cross a bridge then come back on ourselves to follow the coast round and up the Indian Arm. However, taking a boat from Belcarra would save us this 40 km ride. There's no ferry across but luckily Kirsten has a friend who can help.





Canada. Geese.

We sit in the sunshine on the dock watching crabs being caught by a group of fishermen when a small tin boat arrives with Tanya on board and her furry co-pilot Rosa the labrador. There's just enough room to get the bike and bags in then we're treated to a leisurely tour of the cove complete with views up to Whistler and a bald eagle flying overhead. Once deposited back on dry land we offer our thanks and make the short spin up to Kirsten's house. Not just a handy shortcut but a very pleasant way to arrive too.



Catching crabs, Belcarra





Tanya and Rosa





Bald Eagle taking a break on the Indian Arm





Just enough room for tandem and crew

It seems any friends of Tara are friends of Kirsten too so we're instantly made to feel at home along with husband Court and children Emma and Matt. The day ends with ice cream followed by all of us jumping off the end of the jetty into the refreshing water.



Kirsten and co.



We're back on the water with Tanya first thing, paddling up The Indian Arm in some kayaks. We pass her house that sits



right by the water and, like several other waterfront houses, is only accessible by boat as there's no road to it. You get such a different perspective of a place from down on the water compared to on the road. It's still and peaceful and using the arms gives our legs a much needed break. At one point a seal pops it's head up for a quick look then disappears leaving barely a ripple.



Out in kayaks on the Indian Arm



Through the narrows





Taking a break from the paddling

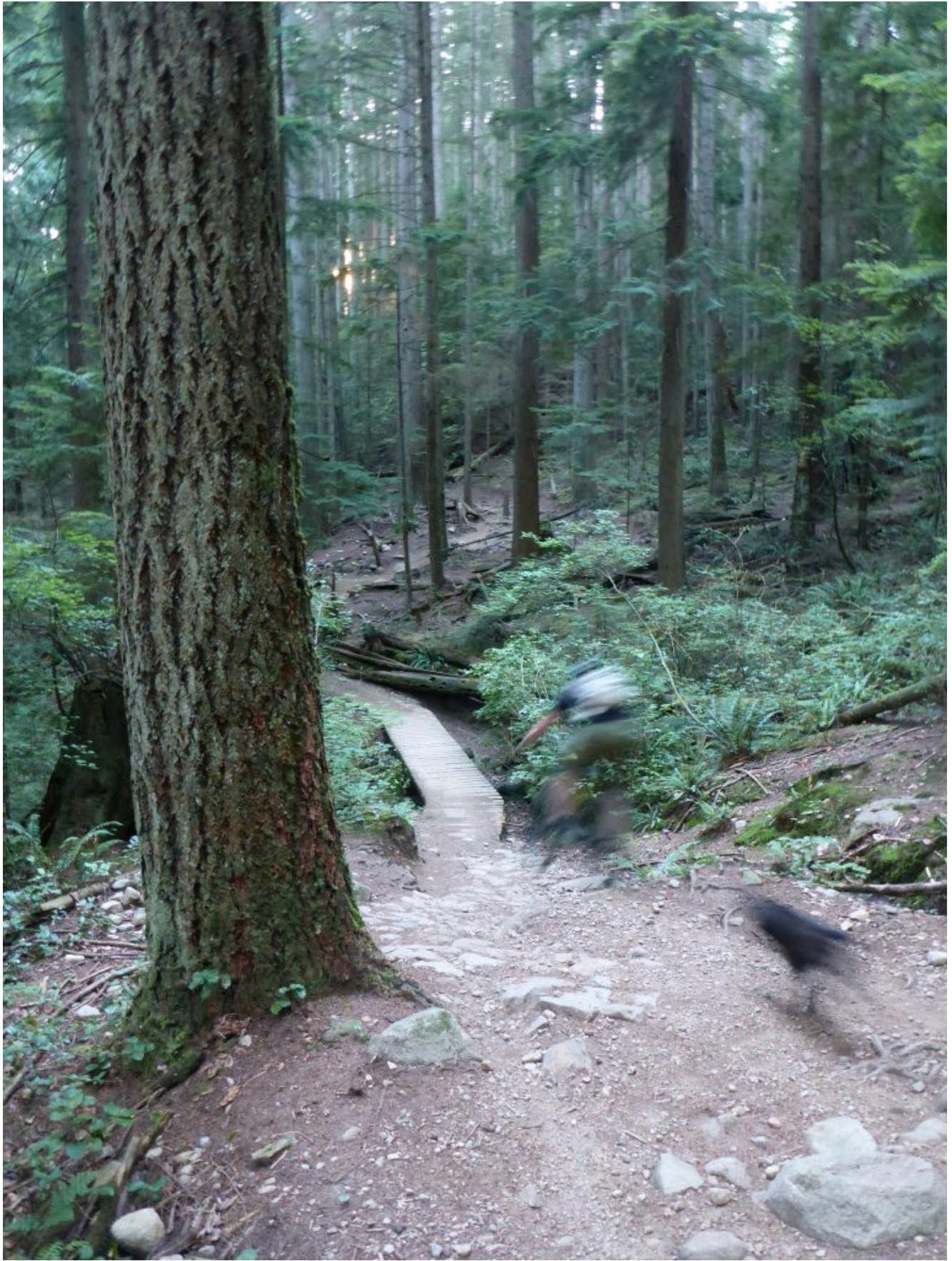
The North Shore has something of a reputation amongst the mountain bike fraternity as being one of the finest locations in the world for the sport. Woven deep in the woods are a tangled web of trails that have been built up since the earliest days that people decided to try riding off road. Ranging from muddy, rocky single track to skinny planks perched several metres up in the air this is somewhere that anyone with a passing interest in mountain biking can lose several hours, and potentially several limbs. Tanya's husband Dave has found a bike for me to use and I join him and his friend Chris for a brilliant evening bouncing along the trails. I quickly discover that my mountain biking skills have been dormant for too long to really be able to tackle this at the speed the bike deserves. Maybe if I come back tomorrow and practice some more. And the next day....





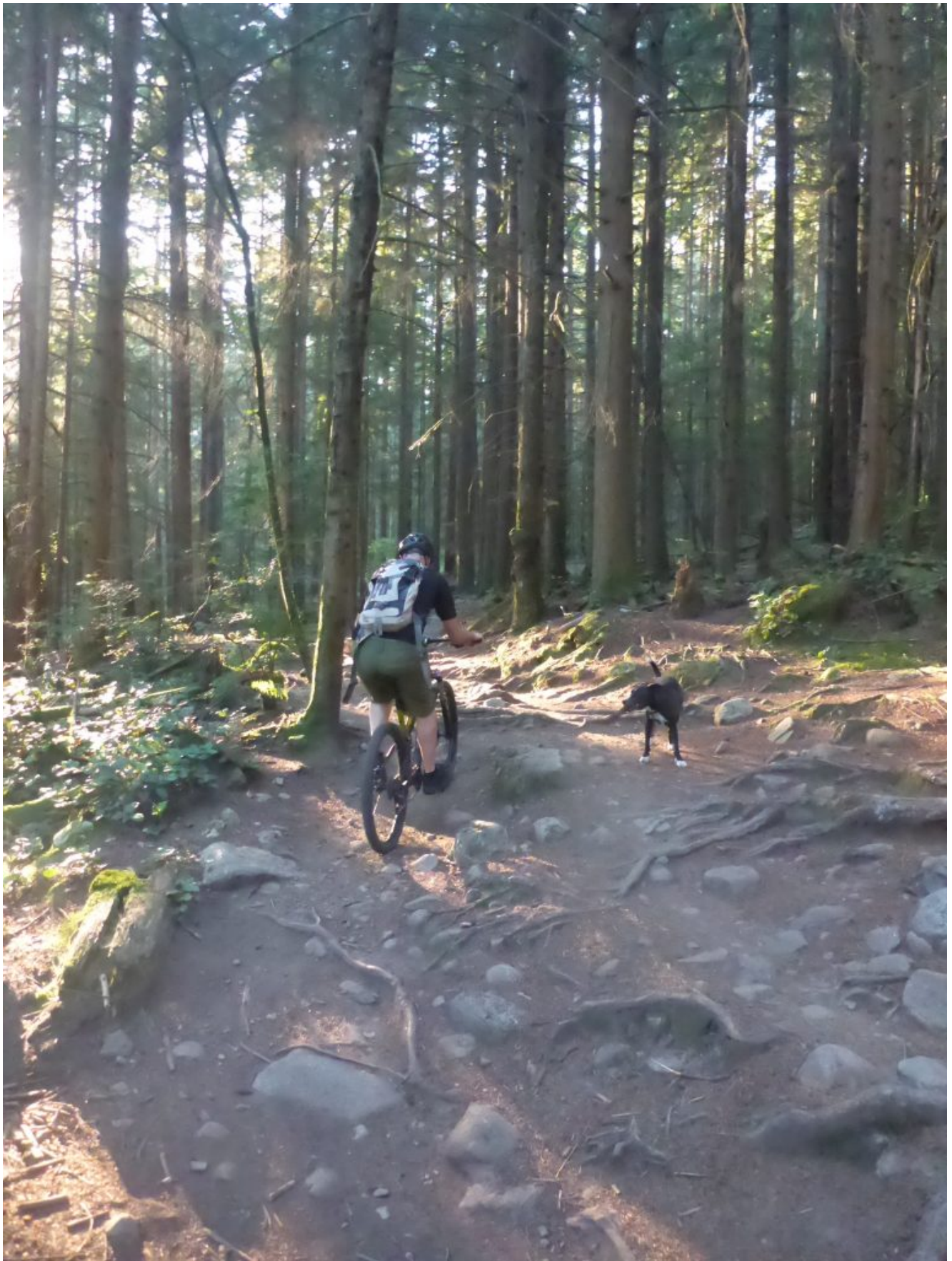
It's a rule that at least one person should be riding a Cove out on the North Shore





Speeding through the woods









## Mountain bikers

A boat ride back to Dave and Tanya's house for a BBQ brings the day to a very pleasant close. As we look across the water the lure of Vancouver and Deep Cove in particular is very strong. As if to tempt us further the next door house, also with no road access, is for sale and it looks like a tempting prospect. Kayaking to work, mountain biking in the summer, skiing in the winter. sounds idyllic, until we discover the price. And this is the dilemma with Vancouver, its popularity and foreign investors have driven property prices sky high so as well as being one of the best places to live it's also one of the most expensive in North America. Looks like we'll be keeping our house in Bristol a bit longer after all.

**Attention  
Dog Guardians**

Pick up after your  
dogs - Thank you.

**Attention Dogs**

Grrrr, bark, woof.  
Good dog.

**District of North Vancouver  
Bylaw 5981-11(i)**

Park sign in Deep Cove





Water access only

Despite wanting to take up permanent residency in Kirsten's basement we have to say goodbye the next day. The road out of

Deep Cove gives us views to downtown Vancouver as it rollercoasters up and down along the north shore. There's a bike lane but it's narrow and the road itself is very busy until we get to Marine Drive where we follow the water's edge more closely and the bulk of the traffic is left to occupy the main highway. We pass through Gleneagles, namesake to the road where we live in Bristol, then we arrive at Horseshoe Bay where ferries run across to Vancouver Island. Until 10pm the previous evening this was our intended destination but instead we zoom straight past it and continue north. Over a burger and a bottle of wine Tanya and Kirsten persuaded us that we really must ride up to Whistler as the road up there is one of the most scenic drives in the world. Being in a suggestible frame of mind we decided to take their advice and now find ourselves on route 99, the Sea to Sky highway.





Route 99

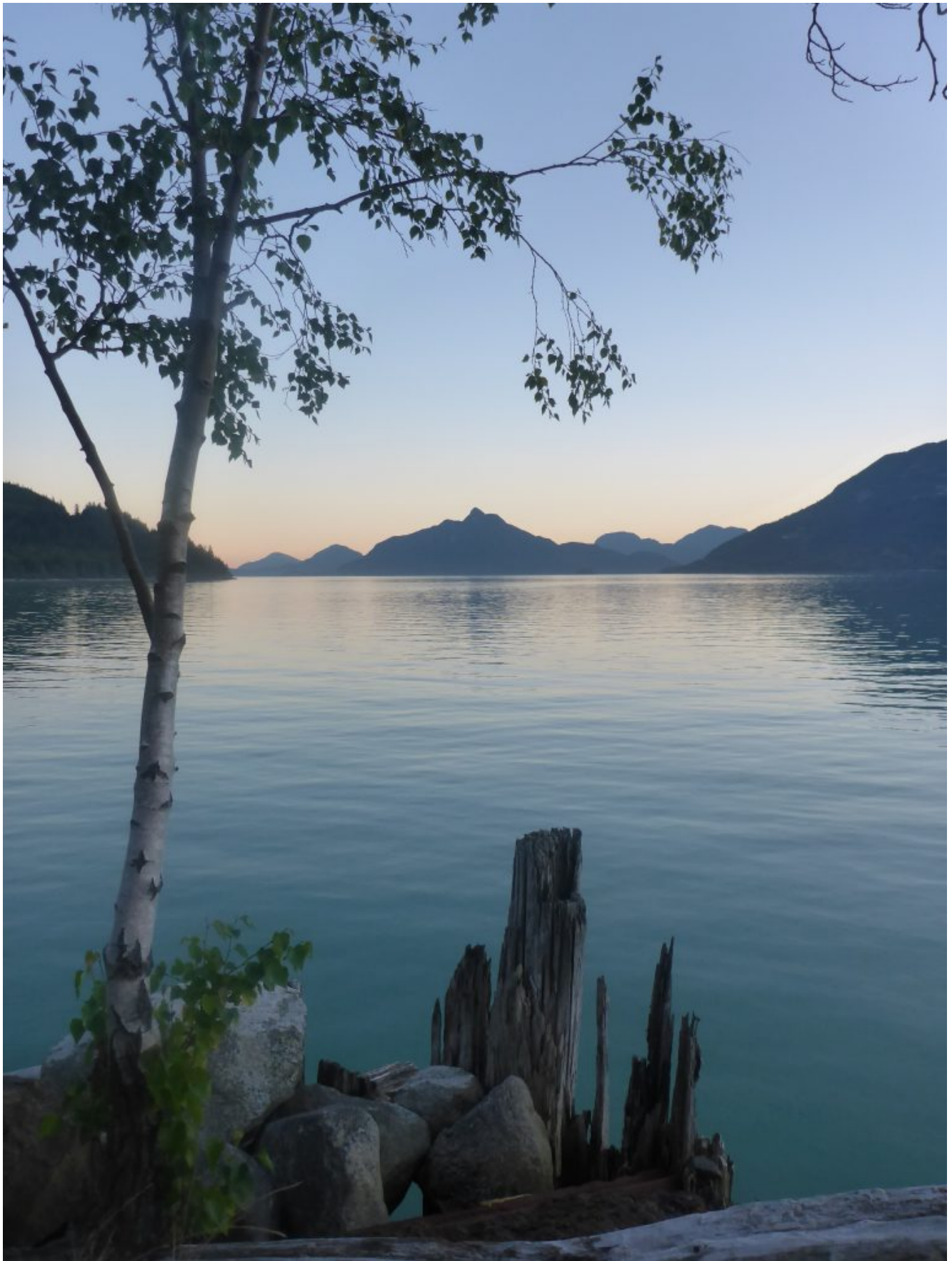
As the name suggests the landscape is a breath-taking panorama from the Howe Sound up to the tops of the huge mountains and

blue sky beyond. I can see why drivers would be enjoying themselves. For cyclists it isn't quite such a breeze though. The road was widened to accommodate the extra traffic for the winter Olympics in 2010 but the hard shoulder is a bit too narrow for my liking, not helped by the rumble strip that occupies a good third of it. We spend most of the afternoon going up and down round headlands too. Still, the views are lovely and we reward ourselves with an ice cream at Lions Bay before eventually setting up the tent behind a marina at Britannia Beach.



The Sea to Sky Highway





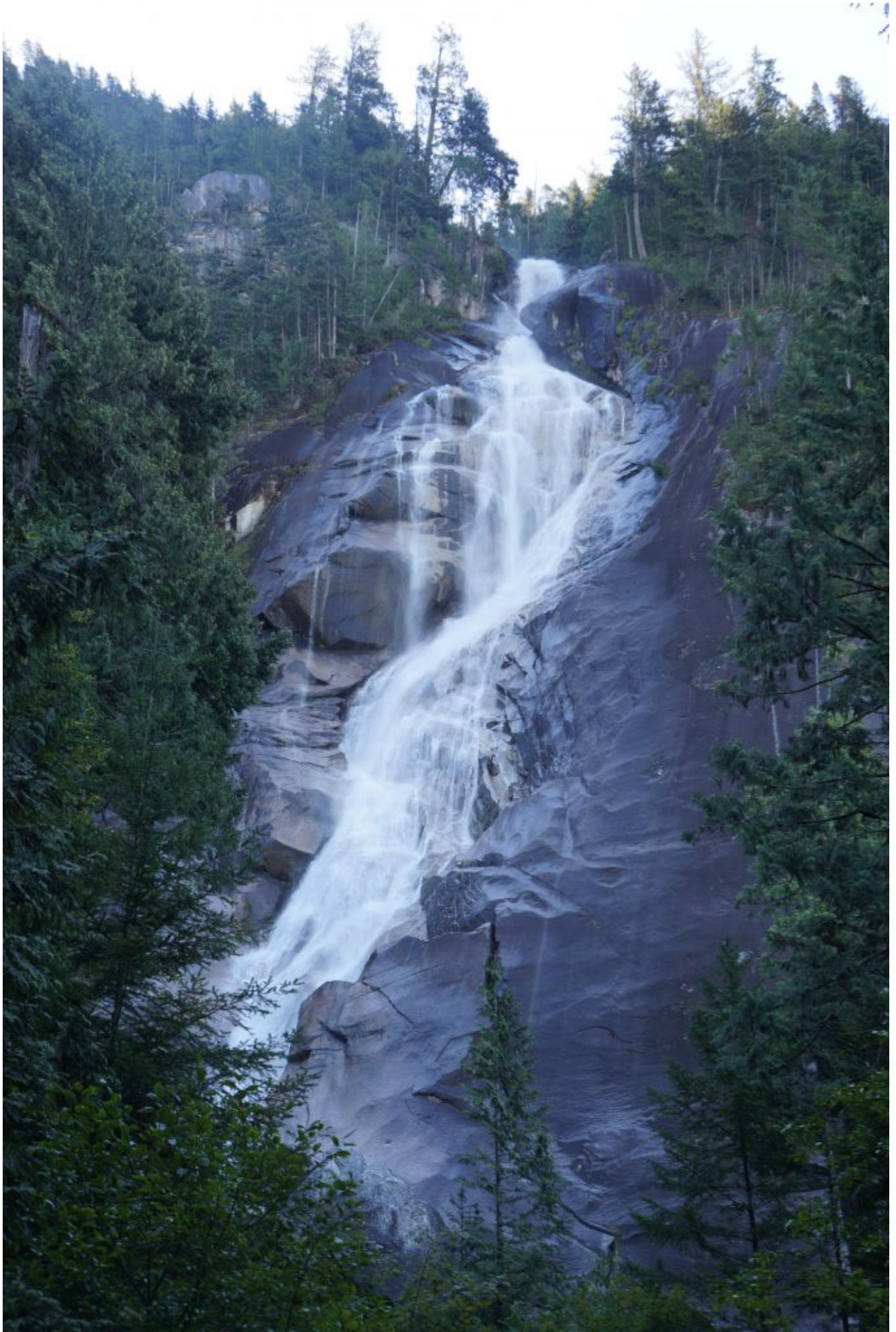
View from Britannia Beach

At Squamish we leave the coast and start to make progress up into the mountains. The climbing is steep in places and then

we're dropped down to have to climb up again. Usually a descent is a good thing but when you know you need to be getting higher it feels like taking two steps forward and one step back. The altitude we've earned is cruelly snatched away and then has to be worked for all over again.

There are various water features to use as an excuse for a break along the way including Shannon Falls, Alice Lake and Brandywine Creek. The last of which provides a much needed bottle top up opportunity as the 38 degree heat is making this a thirsty business.







## Shannon Falls

We're glad to get to Whistler Village by late afternoon and refuel on birthday cake flavoured ice cream and Poutine cheesy chips. The exercise to calorie ratio being brought rapidly back into balance. We soon discover that the Wanderlust festival is in full swing, a celebration of all things yoga and alternative. The punters for this make for a stark contrast from the usual set of downhill mountain bikers that hang around Whistler in the summer. Half the people are walking around in coloured tights with foam mats under their arms while the other half are in body armour with full face helmets under their arms.



Arriving in Whistler





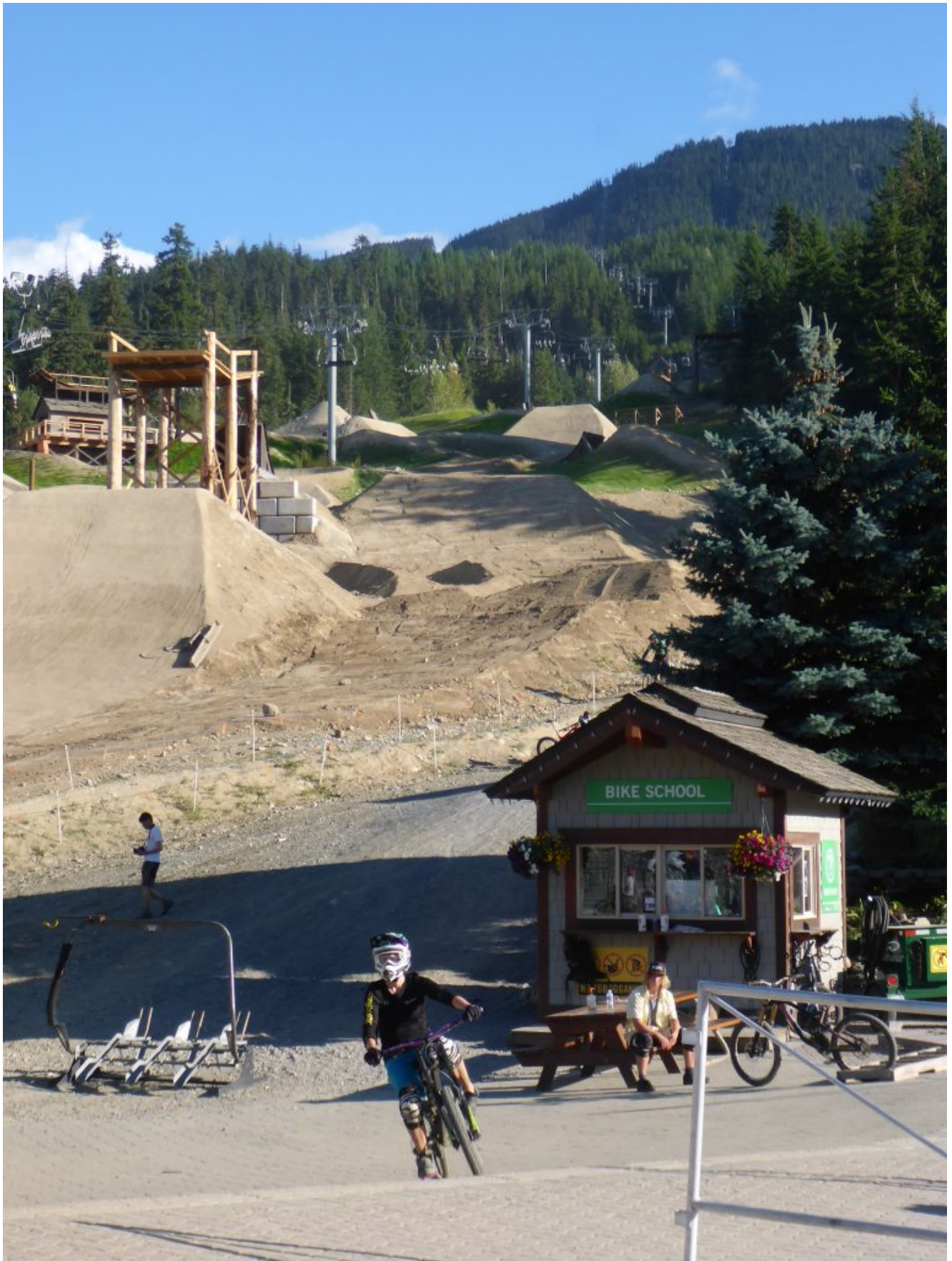
### Extreme Yoga-ists and Zen Mountain Bikers

We emerge from our covert campsite in the woods in the morning to be greeted by the sight of 50 people in the downward dog position. Back in the village we board a cable car that whisks up to the top of Whistler mountain. The famous bike park is a bit too extreme for the tandem so we're venturing out on foot and hike around the peak on the 'High Note Trail'. All around us are the Coastal mountains with bright green glacial lakes sitting amongst the endless pine forests. We pick our way along the rugged path and over pink tinged 'watermelon' snow before catching the Peak to Peak cable car to neighbouring Blackcombe mountain. Laying claim to being the highest cable car in the world as well as the longest single span, we can add it to our list of world beating cable cars that we've ridden.



Toes to the sky



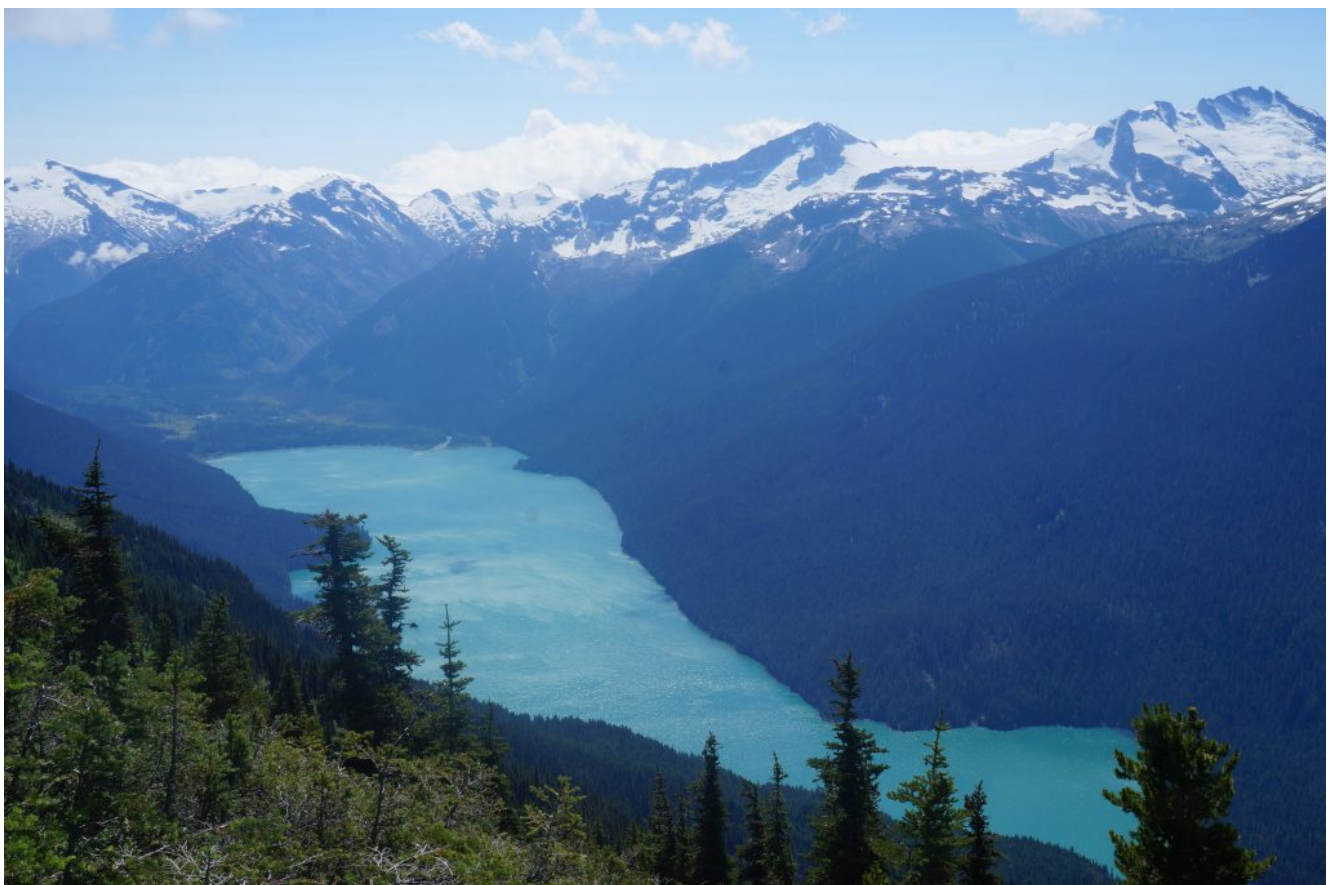


Bike school for the brave





On the High Note trail

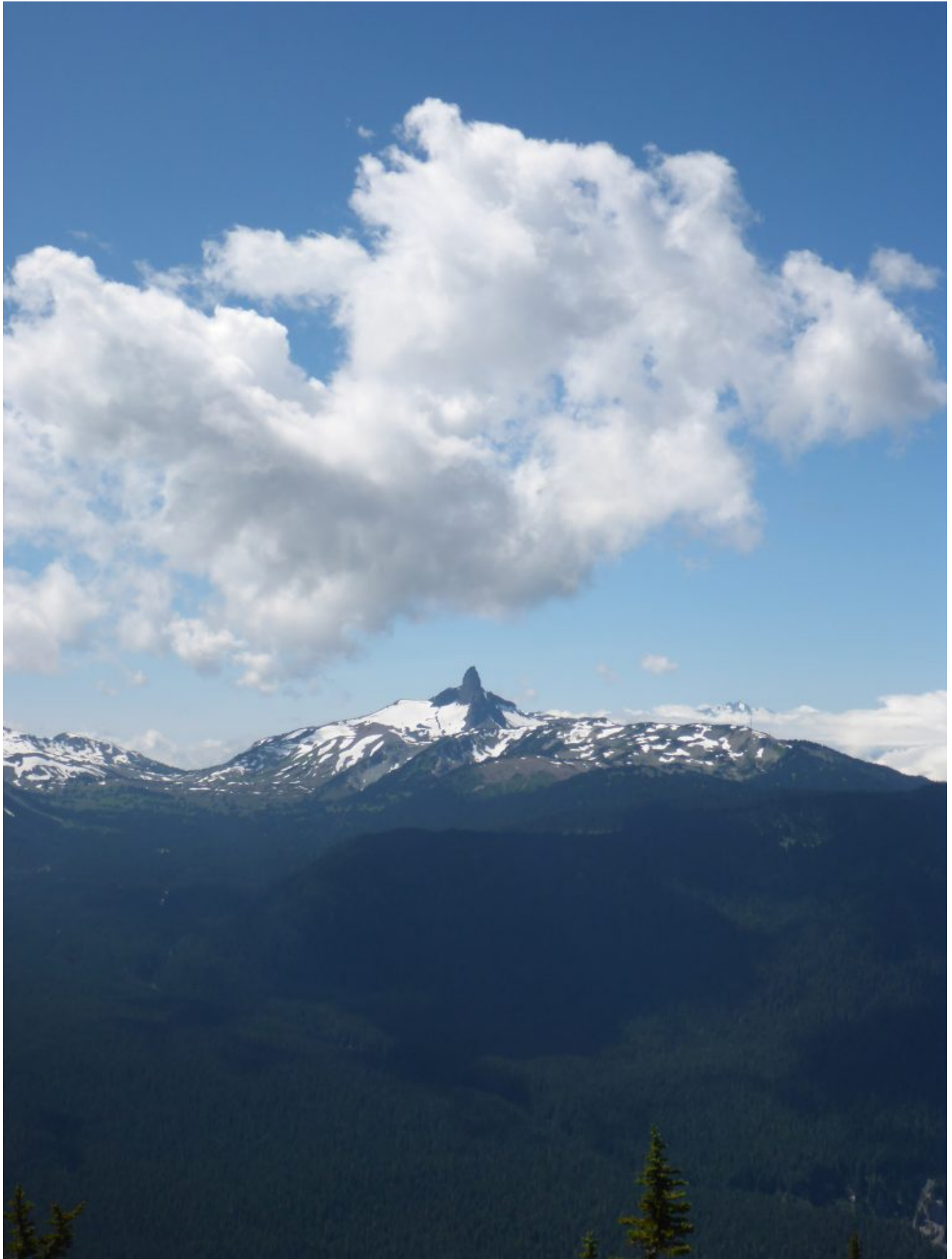


Cheakamus Lake





High Note Trail



More mountain views from The High Note Trail





Lunch at Altitude





Alpine meadow





Are we lost?







Peak to Peak cable car



View from the Peak to Peak



2nd place is first loser





On our way back down to the village our chairlift passes over a ski piste and busy foraging in the grass is a black bear. Luckily he seems oblivious to the juicy snacks that are passing overhead like sushi on a conveyor belt. Finally we get the bear sighting we've been looking out for since Hokkaido and luckily from a safe vantage point.



Bear!

The musical element of the festival includes a free concert from Jose Gonzalez which comes as a nice surprise in the evening and The Carnival Band keep the party going afterwards. Whistler knows how to lay on a good show both in the winter and the summer.





Nodding to the tunes of Jose Gonzalez



Olympic Standard Party

Although the road back to Horesehoe Bay is effectively



downhill we know that it's got nearly as many ups as downs. In the interest of saving time and on the basis that this has been a side trip away from our intended route we take the executive decision to catch the bus back to the Bay. Any time saving is quickly eroded however when we discover that we've left our kindles on the bus shortly after it's sped away. As I may have mentioned before, Kirsty is a voracious reader so to lose her Kindle would be like losing a limb. A phone call to Greyhound and a three hour round trip back into Vancouver and I'm back at the ferry terminal with the trusty Kindles and we can get on board the boat for Vancouver Island.



Buses with bike racks

From Nanaimo we ride out into farmland to our next Warmshowers hosts, Cory and Jim. This forms another connection with Tara



as by chance we discover that they were her first ever hosts on her first cycle tour. More often than not the people we stay with live at the top of a hill and Cory and Jim's house is no exception. Inside there are pictures and souvenirs from all corners of the globe collected during a 10 year trip where they used all forms of transport, including bikes, to explore far flung places. In a bid to encourage their sons to get into cycling they've bought some tandems and are one of the few people to out do our own collection as they have three tandems hanging in their barn.



Cory and Jim, our hosts near Nanaimo





Two of their three tandems

We're given some handy tips for the next day's riding. There's a brief spell on the Trans Canada highway where if we'd turned right we could have followed it all the way to Toronto. Instead we hang a left then turn off through Ladysmith and down to Crofton Harbour to take a ferry to Vesuvius on Saltpring Island. This little village has little to do with it's volcanic name sake, and on the other side of the island Ganges doesn't seem to have much of a Hindu presence but the island itself is a lovely little spot. It's become a popular place for communities of artists to come and find inspiration and like minded friends so the overall feel is very laidback. We lie back on a beach and enjoy views over to the alpenglow on Mount Baker while sea planes and geese take to the evening skies. There are supposed to be orcas under the water too but unfortunately none come to the surface for us.





Mural in Chemainus





Even the Subway gets a mural in Chemainus



Beddis Beach, Salt Spring Island



Camping at Beddis Beach, Salt Spring Island





### Riding on Salt Spring Island

We return to the main island after a thorough soaking from a rain shower in the morning with the ferry dropping us off in another familiar sounding town. From Sidney we pick up the Lochside bicycle trail that makes use of an old railway line and allows us to ride straight into Victoria away from any traffic. An intended coffee stop with an ex-colleague of Kirsty's becomes a generous invitation to stay the night despite their having several house guests already. The desire to move to Canada was so great for Ben and Tiffany that they took the gamble of selling their home in the UK and moving over here 7 years ago despite not having jobs secured and with a 6 month old daughter in tow. The gamble paid off though and they managed to find work and they're now enjoying living out their Canadian dream.





Lochside Rail Trail, Vancouver Island





Ben and his mum, Moira



A tandem loving graffiti artist in Victoria

Unfortunately our Canadian adventure is rapidly coming to an end. It feels like we've sampled a few choice morsels from a feast that could last decades. On our last day we ride into Victoria and take a look in the Royal British Columbia Museum to learn a bit about the First Nations that occupied this land long before Europeans came and took over. It's a sad story of exploitation that will no doubt be repeated once we head south into the USA.





First nation totem poles in the Royal BC Museum, Victoria

**?a?jεč<sup>2</sup>χ<sup>w</sup>ot**  
**How are you?**

Learning some first nation language (or not)





Perfectly preserved 40,000 year old baby mammoth n the Royal BC Museum

The middle of Victoria feels strangely familiar with the architecture taking on a very British appearance. In fact the harbour area could well be mistaken for Bristol if it weren't for the sea planes taxiing in and out.



Victoria Harbour



Parliament Building and BC flag, Victoria

We spend our last night in Canada camped overlooking the Puget



Sound with the mountains of the Olympic Park in Washington State rising up in the distance. We'll be catching a very early ferry across to get a closer look in the morning and can only hope that getting into this next country will go a little smoother. Onwards to the United States of America!



These were the only orcas we managed to spot while on the island





Ferry to The States