

British Columbia

May 13-25, 2024

After watching an episode about [Victoria](#), British Columbia on Samantha Brown's "Places to Love", we decided to take a trip to this beautiful Canadian province. It was a spur-of-the-moment decision so we hurriedly began to plan. Our itinerary would take us to [Vancouver](#) for a four day stay. Then, we would drive our rental car to the Tsawwassen Ferry terminal, ferry to Swartz Bay, and drive to Victoria, where we would stay for three days. Finally, we would drive to [Campbell River](#) for another three days of exploration before making our way back to Vancouver and flights home.

The following are some notes about each day's activities.

Monday, May 13th

We began our trip by driving to Portland Jetport (PWM) to catch our flight to Chicago (ORD). Shortly before we were to begin boarding for our flight, an announcement informed us that we would not be able to fly into Chicago due to dangerous weather. We eventually were able to speak to a United desk agent about our options. She told us that we would either have to fly out tomorrow (more on that later) or try to find another airline that might get us to Vancouver some other way. We would also be required to go back to the departure desk to pick up our checked luggage, which would then need to be checked in again tomorrow. Initially, we were only told that we would have to fly out, tomorrow morning at 6:05, to Newark (EWR), then from Newark to San Francisco (SFO) and from there to Vancouver (VYR). That's three flights instead of two, and the worst part would be that we would be flying in Coach rather than our originally schedule Business/First seats. It also meant that we would need to stay in Portland overnight and, fortunately, we got a room at the Hilton Garden Inn near the airport. We were also in need of food, since we had been planning to have dinner served on our flight. Therefore, we decided to go to DiMillo's on the wharf, since it would certainly be open on a Monday night.

Tuesday, May 14th

We got up early and prepared to drive to the airport parking lot. Everything was going well from PWM to EWR (UA1754) and we easily made our connection to the flight to SFO (UA1382). This was a large plane with 3-4-3 seating and our assigned seats were far in the back and right in the middle two seats (more on that later). The flight from Hell, probably worse than Miami to Buenos Aires. When we arrived in San Francisco, we went to the United Lounge nearest our departure gate. After a nice respite from the crowds and chaos of the terminal, we boarded our flight to Vancouver, which was more comfortable. However, on arrival, we still had to pick up our luggage, transport Customs and Immigration, then find Enterprise to procure our rental car. Finally, we drove the Toyota Corolla to our apartment on Alberni Street where we met Simeon, the owner's son, to give instructions on parking and entry to the building/apartment. By the time all of that had been accomplished, we tiredly moved into our new housing, including a

short trip to a nearby store for breakfast ingredients. We mistakenly went to [Bellaggio](#), near our apartment. It was a mistake because we ordered too much food. Supposedly, we would eat it later, but we finally tossed the leftovers.

Wednesday, May 15th

After breakfast, we walked north on Burrard Street, past the Art Deco [Marine Building](#), toward Canada Place on Vancouver Harbour. As we walked around the area on this beautiful day, we happened to notice that one of the cruise ships on the pier was the [Zaandam](#), a Holland America ship. Since we had seen the [Zuiderdam](#) in the Panamá Canal (our ship in the upcoming cruise in July), which is also a Holland America ship, we were amazed by the coincidence. We also talked with a couple who would be boarding the Zaandam that afternoon for an Alaska cruise. They were very excited about it and Sue offered to take some pictures of them by the ship. After continuing our walk around Canada Place and seeing another cruise ship, this one a Regency, we began to think about lunch. We



thought we would walk toward the [Vancouver Lookout](#) and find a place to eat. However, due to the fact that the lunchtime crowd had already congregated in the few places we encountered, we ended up returning to the Brass Fish, near the Marine Building. Then we walked back to the Vancouver Lookout for a 360° view of downtown, though the signage at each point was a bit confusing. Next, we walked back toward the apartment past the [Pendulum Gallery](#), which had an exhibit of Sculptor's Society of BC artists. Then, we toured the [Bill Reid Gallery](#), the perfect stop to complete our downtown exploration. We arrived back at the apartment tired and not keen on the idea of finishing last night's dinner. So, we decide to go to a nearby "sushi" restaurant called [Hello Nori](#) on Robson street. Interesting concept for a sushi meal and very satisfying.

Thursday, May 16th

After a well-deserved good night's sleep, we awoke and began planning today's travels. [Granville Island](#) was our choice. Furthermore, we decided to find some food at the [Public Market](#) to have at our apartment for a relaxing dinner. Our first task after arriving there was to find parking, requiring a couple of trips around. Soon though, we parked and started walking to orient ourselves. We headed toward the dock where there were tiny ferries to take us on the water and the [Science World](#) (which was overrun with kids). The ferries are fun for just getting out on the water surrounding the island. We saw a few sights that we didn't expect; e. g., [BC Place](#), [False Creek Yacht Club](#), bridges, marinas, and lots of boating activity. After returning for lunch at [Dockside](#) and exploration of the Arts Center, we began our search for a charcuterie dinner and as nice bottle of wine. We found vendors for cheese (a French goat and a blue), charcuterie (prosciutto and salami) and a small focaccia (at Terra Breads) in the Market. Then we found a nice Malbec at Liberty Wine Merchants. We returned to the apartment, rested a while, had dinner and went to bed. It was a long, busy day.



Friday, May 17th

Another beautiful day for our trip to [Stanley Park](#). [Vancouver Aquarium](#) was our first planned visit and it was fascinating, huge, and very busy. We had a quick lunch and continued exploring the aquarium, watching the seals and sea lions and searching for the sloth that was, supposedly, in a part of the aquarium we had visited earlier. We finally found the reclusive creature, a two-toed version, asleep in its quarters but with toes and part of its head visible. We drove to the [First Nation Totem Poles](#) followed by a trip to the [Prospect Point Lookout](#) at the northernmost point of Stanley Park. We saw the mountains in the distance, Northern Vancouver and [Lion's Gate Bridge](#) (which is reminiscent of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco). This view inspired me to drive across to see more of what's north of Vancouver. However, it was a poor decision and we spent a lot of time in heavy traffic. Finally, we returned to the apartment to relax before our dinner reservation at [Joey @ Bentall One](#) where we enjoyed a dinner of small plates.



Saturday, May 18th

We drove to [Tsawwassen Ferry Terminal](#) to catch the ferry to [Swartz Bay](#) on the way to Victoria. When we reached the [Hotel Rialto](#) in Victoria, we were told that since we were a bit early, they would give us room 403. It was a great room, right on the corner of Pandora and Douglas Streets so it had a fantastic view. After settling into our new home for the next few days, we decided to go for a walk around the neighborhood. We planned to have dinner at [Brasserie L'Ecole](#), which was just a few blocks from the hotel, did not take reservations, and was very popular. We would walk past to see if there was a line waiting to get in. We had read that this restaurant was popular and, surely enough, there was a line at the front door. We joined the line and began talking with a woman who told us that we were right to wait in line because, by the time the restaurant opened at five o'clock, only the first few people in line would be served. Fortunately, we were amongst those chosen few. However, the food was not that special and we realized that the popular dish was steak, with or without frites. So, we finished our so-so "French" meal and headed back to the hotel. The wind had picked up and was very cold so we didn't linger outside.

Sunday, May 19th

We were able to find a place that served breakfast starting at seven o'clock just a few blocks down Douglas Street. On the way back to the hotel, we found [Ruby on Johnson](#), about a block away and discovered that it opened at seven as well (more on that later). After breakfast, we showered and drove to [Butchart Gardens](#), had lunch at the Blue Poppy, and started exploring the many beautiful [gardens](#). We started with the [Sunken Garden](#), walking and attempting to identify the various flora amongst the massive crowds. Next came the [Rose Garden](#), which was not really in season so it was not as

spectacular as expected. The [Japanese Garden](#) was peaceful and serene and the [Italian Garden](#) was our last destination, since we were too tired to go to [Buchart Cove](#). When we returned to the hotel, we wanted to see more of the neighborhood. We walked past the [Puzzle Lab](#) and Sue bought their “rare moon” puzzle as a souvenir. We took it back to the hotel and prepared to have dinner at [Ferris Upstairs Oyster Bar](#).

Monday, May 20th (Victoria Day)

We walked to Ruby on Johnson Street. Although it would normally open at seven o'clock, they didn't open until eight because today is a holiday. However, it gave us the opportunity to go to [John's Place](#), which we had not considered because it doesn't open until eight every morning. Several people have said that it's the best place for breakfast so we went there at eight o'clock. The “Bat Out of Hell” Meatloaf ‘n’ Eggs with Savory Cornbread and Marsala Gravy was a breakfast I'll never forget. After that we went back to the hotel and watched the Victoria Day parade travel down Douglas Street right outside our window. Lots of marching bands, race cars and motorcycles. We began walking to the [Royal BC Museum](#) near the harbor. We had planned to stop for lunch at [Red Fish Blue Fish](#) because I had eaten there the first time I came to Victoria. It was new then and not very busy but today there was a waiting line that appeared to be about an hour long, at least. Rather than wait, we walked up the hill to the museum and found a couple of food trucks for lunch. Then we went into the museum and found it to be fabulous, with a great exhibit about Stonehenge. There were also a lot of exhibits about local and national history. We finally got through most of the exhibits and were



ready for a drink at the [Empress Hotel bar](#). We wanted to try the Empress brand gin because it is so unusual, purple with a floral accent. So, Sue had an Empress and tonic and I had an Empress martini. In fact, I had two Empress martinis. They were once-in-a-lifetime kind of a thing. Our bartender also mentioned that our restaurant of choice for dinner, [Wind Cries Mary](#) was top rated, which we had been told before when we were at Brasserie L'Ecole. That made us anticipate dinner even more.

Tuesday, May 21st

We retrieved the car, checked out of Hotel Rialto, loaded up the luggage and started driving north to [Nanaimo](#) on Canada 1. About ten minutes out of Victoria, we got into a traffic jam that New York would be proud of. It was caused by a guy who died behind the wheel of a big, one-vehicle carrier that was jammed into the dividing ditch between the northbound and southbound lanes of the highway. We actually saw the body bag being



carried to an ambulance. What a mess! Anyway, we continued on until arriving in Nanaimo, where we again encountered unknown traffic detours. Fortunately, we were able to maneuver around town until we found a nice little restaurant for



lunch, then on to Campbell River. Finally, we arrived at our rental. It was located close to a busy road and we had been told backing into the driveway would be best. So, that's what I did and we tried to determine whether to back all the way down to the entry to the apartment but soon realized that would be much too risky. We moved our luggage indoors and settled into the small, very well-appointed, comfortable apartment with a view of the [Inside Passage](#) that was priceless. Our next project involved buying supplies, mostly for breakfast. We found a nearby market (Save-On-Food), stocked up, returned it to the apartment, and went to Moxie's for dinner. Another long, weary day.

Wednesday, May 22nd

We were excited to walk to [Elk Falls](#), the suspension bridge and view area. Finally, we were there. Elk Falls was roaring into the canyon below as we approached the suspension bridge. It was attached to a landing on the other side and was exhilarating to walk across. We have many more pictures but I'm attempting to keep this short. Anyway, we went down to a viewing area for an even closer view of the falls. The trip had been about a mile and a half of up-and-down walking and we were hungry. So, we went to a place called [More Eatery](#) for lunch on the way home. Next, we went to a small museum down the hill from our apartment. The [Museum at Campbell River](#) had an interesting display concentrating on indigenous nations and how tragically the British dealt with them. It also included an art exhibit with the works of Richard Calver. We planned to have dinner at a sushi restaurant called Wasabiya but didn't make a reservation or call. When we arrived there, it was a small, apparently popular restaurant and we would have to wait at least an hour for a table. So, we found Sushi Jo, called them and said we would arrive in about ten minutes. Turned out to be pretty good sushi.



Thursday, May 23rd

Today we went on the [Homalco Wildlife Tour](#). It was to be conducted on Howgus (meaning "grizzly bear" in the Homalco language), a landing craft providing one outside seat and one inside seat per passenger. The weather made being inside much more comfortable, but it was nice to be able to go outside at times. Howgus was piloted by Brendan, an expert on the area waters. Our guide Janet gave us fascinating background stories about her heritage with



the Homalco nation and other indigenous people in the area. Brendan took us north into the passage. I'm pretty sure we circumnavigated [Quadra Island](#) because we went around the southern tip before returning. We were able to see lots of eagles, hawks, gulls, ducks, and a plethora of sea birds. We saw seals and sea lions but no whales, unfortunately. We did, however, see a black bear, the first I've ever seen in the wild, even though I spent a lot of time



in wilderness areas and they were around. The ride coming back was wild because our craft was heading almost directly into the wind and the waves were breaking over our bow. It was very rough but we made it back into port. There had been twelve customers on this tour and one did get seasick. Sue had also been feeling like she had a cold, although not related to the boat tour. We were happy to get back and were anticipating dinner at [Angler's](#).

Friday, May 24th

Sue found a ferry service near Nanaimo ([Duke Point](#)) that leaves at the same time as we had planned to leave from Swartz Bay, near Victoria, to take back to Tsawwassen. Which means that we will not have to drive the distance between Nanaimo and Swartz Bay and we don't need to leave as early for the same reason. It also saves us some time because the ferry from Swartz Bay is no longer part of the equation. Brilliant! So, we packed up the car and drove to Duke Point. On the way, we found a little place called [Coco Café](#) for lunch. We arrived at the ferry terminal early and the ferry was about fifteen minutes late, but we made it to Tsawwassen. However, we immediately encountered an awful traffic jam on our way to YVR and arrived very late to the Holiday Inn at the airport. Fortunately, we encountered some very kind, helpful staff at the airport that probably saved us some time. Nevertheless, we did arrive very late and our flight to Chicago leaves early in the morning.

Saturday, May 25th

We arose early and caught the hotel shuttle to the airport. Once again, the Canada Air staff was extremely helpful and we whisked through check-in, Customs and security. We were even too early for access to the airport lounge. We would be allowed access because we were flying in Business class. All of these things made our mood much lighter, but we were both starting to feel as if a terrible cold had descended on us. When we arrived in Chicago, we made our way to the United lounge (we have passes because we're both Mileage Plus members). We had a pleasant, light meal from the offerings in the lounge. Our next flight, to Portland, was uneventful and we were so tired at this point that it didn't really matter. It was good to be on our way home.

Sunday, May 26th

Tested positive for COVID. We think it was the result of the flight from EWR to SFO.