

# Traveldiary Brigitte & Heinz

**Canada: by car from Vancouver to Halifax**  
(plus 7 days in the Dominican Republic)



## Chapter 9

May 2004 - October 2004

# Canada & side-trip to visit Urs in the Dominican Republic

## Flight from Bangkok to Vancouver

We left Bangkok for Vancouver on May 13<sup>th</sup> 2004 on a flight via Taiwan. In Taipeh, we had immediate transfer to our connection flight and we were quite surprised, that over 30% of our new fellow passengers were of Indian origin. Later we learned, that Vancouver has the largest Sikh population after India's Punjab district. We were surrounded by Sari's and Turbans and of course, by other Asians, coming from all over the continent.

It was quite amusing, how long it took, till all the Indian people had found seats that suited them better than the allocated ones, and this in a full plane. Later, when meals were served, China Airline personnel was busy for ages, distributing about a dozen different special meals, to satisfy all the different requests the various ethnic groups had made, before the Western and Asian passengers also got something to eat. Afterwards, when a movie was shown, we heard a Chinese shyly ask a flight attendant, whether it would be appropriate, to ask the Indian Sikh sitting in front of him, to remove his turban, so he could see the screen too. Well, after learning that this is a religious symbol, he didn't dare asking...

## Canada: by car from Vancouver to Halifax

Finally, after 15 hours, we reached Vancouver at 9:30 in the morning, still on the same day and theoretically only one hour after we had left Bangkok, because we had flown over the dateline.

[Canada](#) gave us a friendly reception - apart from the long questioning customs clerk. We saw big green gardens and clean wide streets. Every Canadian, we got in contact with, had always time for a chat and they were very very friendly.

## Vancouver

The city of [Vancouver](#) is extremely multicultural, which gave it a nice and very special character. Especially Asians were here in big numbers, be they immigrants, tourists or language students. In many parts of the city, almost 80% of the faces we saw, were of Asian origin. Many of them had taken the chance to open an own business, often a restaurant. But also many immigrants from other countries did the same. Unfortunately, within our two weeks in that city, we couldn't try them all, because the choice was just too big. At least we got to taste some Malay, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese, Mongolian, Indian, Ukrainian, Greek, French, Mexican... Most diners, it didn't matter whether they were immigrants or tourists, seemed to prefer their country of origin's kitchen over the other ethnic varieties or North American fast-food. It was not uncommon, that all the other guests came from the same country as the Chef and at one place, they didn't even have an

English menu. The only thing common, probably of Canadian influence, were the huge portions, as for example the 300gr. of Feta-Cheese, served on a mixed starter plate! In general, the quality was quite high and prices were rather low.



The only annoyance in Vancouver downtown, were the many beggars on the streets. Almost all of them were white and didn't even look too poor. Probably, most of them were addicted to alcohol or another drug. They preferred to hang around touristy areas and Vancouver gets very many tourists. Often, they arrived by the thousands in huge luxury cruise-liners, that stop here on their way to Alaska.

After the heat in Thailand, we enjoyed the moderate 22 degrees and soon wanted to take advantage of the more tolerant attitude of - otherwise conservative - Canada: we could go to a nude beach!

We enjoyed it double, after 5 months "covered" in Asia, where we had to cover up some selected parts. Surprisingly, there were large numbers of sunbathers and even some tough swimmers at [Wreck-beach](#). The dark sandy beach was littered with driftwood logs, washed onto the shore after they were lost by the logging companies, that transport them dragging as rafts, on the sea. Another thing that amazed us at Wreck-Beach, was the number of Asians. Of course, they didn't make up 80% of the people as in downtown, but still, their 20% share represented at least their overall population of greater Vancouver.

Except that they didn't feel ashamed to go nude, they were even seeking a suntan, whereas in Asia, they all preferred to be white. We noticed several other differences to their culture at home: here they've learned to say "no" or even: "I don't know", plus we heard them complain about their country mates, that they saw spitting or littering the streets of their homeland, during a visit back to Asia and the worst to us: in the countryside, they even closed their restaurants already at 7 o'clock!

## Car purchase

We believe, we have seen almost all of Vancouver's points of interest and we came across many suburbs,

while searching for a good second hand car. It took us some time, to get a feeling of what was offered, since we didn't know many of the American made cars. Neither were we familiar with many of the European and Japanese brands on sale here. We soon realized, that imported cars (non-American) were much more expensive, because they got a better reputation to be solid, than American cars that concentrated on comfort and luxury-equipment, rather than long-lasting quality. Furthermore, they usually had very big engines with 6-8 cylinders, sucking up a lot of petrol. However, when we were asking about the consumption, no dealer ever had a clue, since Canadian customers never seem to ask that question.

After checking many sites in the internet, to check out those most typical American cars, we had been offered, we found that they depended on 13-16 litres for 100 km. But as you all know, we much rather spend the money for OUR food, than for the car's and so we looked harder to find an alternative, until we found that needle in the haystack. So we became the owners of a Saturn, a brand owned by GM and inspired by Japanese models. It's a 9 year old station wagon with a 4 cylinder engine and only 87'000 km. It cost us 3'750 Canadian Dollars plus tax, which made a total of C\$ 4'300 (about 2'650 Euro). After driving it for some time, we were delighted to find out, that it really consumes 6.3 lt/100km only. Bingo!

We got registration and insurance very quickly and even the bonus for good driving records we have had in Switzerland, could be inherited with the help of a letter from our former, to our new insurance with the government of British Columbia.



## **Lonely scenery between Vancouver and Banff**

Now we were ready to start our big tour across Canada. Leaving Vancouver, we came onto quiet roads just 20 km outside. We followed a scenic fjord to the north and stopped after 50 km in [Squamish](#). As we immediately liked this little place, we spontaneously decided to stay. It was not really its charm, rather its differences to Vancouver. Instead of a big ethnic variety of restaurants, we found at least 20 different fast food restaurants. Soon thereafter we realized, that this marked just the begin of a vast fast-food polluted land ahead of us, which was to last all the way until we reached the french-influenced province of Québec some 4'500 km east. At least, not all of those fast-food chains were of the greasy North American type: some served Mexican food, others freshly ground coffee, freshly baked muffins or croissants. One was even specialising in ice-cream.

We found also many so-called "looney shops" which sell most items for a Looney. In case you hear this for the first time; here some explanation: The name of Looney was given to the 1 Dollar coin, as it depicts a Loon, a species of water bird, the Tooney; 2 Dollar coin, then probably got its name of a slang, meaning two. Further they call the 25 cents a Quarter, the 10 cent a Dime, and the 5 cent a Nickel.

As we stayed at a hostel with a good kitchen, we went to the supermarket to buy some food. We were quite puzzled how expensive quality food in Canada was and it is still a miracle to us, how the restaurants can offer such huge portions for such a low price. Only buying bulk, pre-cooked meals or low-quality products were cheap. But as feeding on fast-food is not our habit, we just paid the price and went back to the hostel with our groceries.

From Squamish, we continued north through an amazing alpine landscape, seeing the first few Canadian deer, which they call Elk here. Even though it was raining, we briefly stopped at the posh summer- and winter ski resort of Whistler. The entire "village" had only recently been built between the ski slopes.

After another couple of hours on windy, but wide mountain-roads, we stayed overnight at [Lillooet](#). Even though, this was in the middle of no-where, there was a certain legacy of the past gold rush left, despite the fact that of the 15'000 inhabitants it apparently had in 1860, the population shrunk to 2'700 today, most of the buildings still have that look, which gives the whole place a "wild west" feel.

Along many rivers and lakes, we drove on through a hilly countryside eastwards. Reaching [Salmon Arm](#), we were looking for accommodation quite hard, as we couldn't find neither a Hostel nor a cheap Motel. In the end we got rewarded with an experience, we're not sure, if otherwise we would ever had made it in our lives: we stayed at an old people's home!

Guided by a good weather forecast, we went south to the Okanagan Valley. And really, in [Kelowna](#), we got temperatures over 30 degrees Celsius, whilst it was rainy in many other areas.

Thanks to the Lady that runs the Hostel where we stayed, we found Kelowna's nude beach. A sign clearly marked, that dogs had to be kept on lashes and that nudity was not allowed. And ironically, 50 meters past that sign, all dogs roamed freely and all sunbathers were in the buff!!! So we didn't worry and simply joined the other illiterates.

Continuing along various lakes and taking the free ferry across the Arrowlake, we came to the beautifully located little [NAKUSP INTERNATIONAL HOSTEL](#) in [Nakusp](#). This place had recently been opened by an English-Indian woman and her French partner. We had some very interesting chats with the young couple and they gave us directions, how to find not only the commercial hot springs, but also some lonely hot-pools in the forest. When we reached [St. Leon Hot Spring](#) in the woods, we shortly talked to the couple that was just leaving this beautiful site and then soaked in the 40 degrees hot sulphur water enjoying the quiet and superb setting beneath the fir trees and were thankful to those people, who set up and looked after this manmade little bathing basin.



## First impressions of Banff Nationalpark

On the drive out and also on the next day, we were lucky to see bears along the road. One was just crossing the track a few meters in front of our car. As there was still a lot of snow in the mountains, they moved down to lower areas, where food was already plentiful and now after their hibernation, the bears were very hungry.

Driving into the **Canadian Rocky Mountains** of Alberta, we reached famous [Lake Louise](#) in [Banff National Park](#).

Although it was not a sunny day, the turquoise colour of this lake was truly spectacular and it looked even more amazing, when we saw it from above, while hiking up to Mirror Lake. The namesake couldn't be

reflected however, as there was still a big part covered in ice.

Walking higher from there, we had to cross knee-deep snow on the trail almost all the way up to Lake Agnes, which was even more covered in ice. To reward us, the teahouse was open and we spoiled ourselves with Devon' Tea. It was a very cozy place that filled up even more, when it started snowing wildly outside. Luckily, half an hour later, it stopped again and we could walk down dry. Another lake, that was quite scenic in this area, is called Moraine Lake. These excursions, we've made from the tourist village of Lake Louise, which has only expensive accommodation. Already for staying in a four-bed-dormitory in the Youth Hostel, we had to pay C\$ 84 (Euro 52) for the 2 of us, whilst others usually cost about

40 C\$ for a double-room. But we must say, it was much more luxury than necessary. It had for example a sauna, which we didn't use, because a big sign at the entrance read "clothing must be worn at all times" **CLOTHING!** Heinz had made his experience on his last visit to Canada 16 years ago, when he entered a sauna in the nude, receiving lots of "attention" from the others that were sitting there in trainers. That's cultural difference, as in Switzerland; we would be kicked out of a sauna, if we would wear anything at all!

As we continued our trip, we came across lots of wildlife, mostly deer and at almost every stop we saw Chipmunks, whistling marmots or ground squirrel. Coming out to the prairies, a beautiful wolf crossed just in front of the car - or maybe it was a coyote - we're not sure.

## Visiting friends in Calgary

As we wanted to meet our friends Juliet & Basim in [Calgary](#), we interrupted our discovery of the Rockies National Parks. That meeting was a funny happening, as Heinz had met Juliet 16 years ago whilst traveling in this very area and they had stayed in contact since then. One and a half years ago, Juliet, meanwhile with a family, moved from Australia to Calgary, together with her husband Basim, a very nice Palestinian from Jordan and their two children. We had last met in Australia 13 years ago, so there was a lot to catch up with. They spoiled us in every respect and we got to know a lot more of how immigrants experience this country. An example that amused us, was their statement about Canadian bread. They said "having been to Europe, we realized that Australian bread is just crap, but after getting to know the Canadian stuff, we realized that Australian crap is by far not the worst!!!" We agreed, as for us, good bread is important too, but we have been quite lucky so far, as we often stayed in small villages, that seemed to attract mainly European immigrants. Many of them had opened bakeries that sold pretty decent bread, sometimes even competing each other in the same village.



## Power of Nature

When we continued our travels, we came to the village of [Pincher Creek](#), near the American border. We visited Waterton Lake, where it was incredibly windy, no wonder, they were building wind power generators by the dozen in this area.

Approaching the Rocky Mountains again from the south, we were driving back west towards British Columbia. Before, we stopped at Turtle mountain where 30 mio.<sup>3</sup> cubic meters of rock had crushed down in April 1903, burying big parts of Frank village beneath. Standing atop "[Frank Slide memorial site](#)" even 100 years later, we were shown once more, how powerful nature can be.

As we can take advantage of nature's power on the positive side, we decided to go out to a hotspring on our way. We were told that the forest road to the spring we had chosen, was not suitable for our car and so we drove out to some other one, that was recommended. The dirt road to that place was in excellent condition but got muddy as it started to rain and so, our car was covered in a mud pack by the time we arrived. Surprised how many cars were at the parking lot and seeing how good the track was, down to the river, we thought, we better pack our bathing gear this time - just in case. Reaching the three pools of the hotspring, we were not surprised to find them all crammed full, as it was Saturday and we were also not surprised that all men wore knee-long trousers. As we had heard before, from some German immigrants (some bakers), a man wearing knickers as common on any beach in Europe, often gets judged as being homosexual all over Northern America, and therefore, gets lots of attention. Heinz didn't want any of this and Brigitte didn't want to get changed in front of this big prudish crowd, that had already lots of empty beer cans around... So we just backed out and went off, to wash our car.

## Rocky Mountains Nationalparks

Via Invermere, we drove back up to the Rocky Mountains. First, we passed a narrow gorge leading into [Kootenay National Park](#), where we visited beautiful Olive lake. Then, we passed a big area that had been destroyed by huge wildfires last year. Although it had been mainly sunny, by the time we reached [Banff](#) town site, the weather became nasty and cold and there was even some snow mixed under the rain. We headed for the tourist office and got the address of an elderly lady, who rented out some cabins. They were old but relatively cheap and among the last buildings that hadn't been torn down yet and replaced by bigger ones that had turned Banff into a big touristy resort town. After various daytrips, we left to discover the [Icefields Parkway](#), a scenic road, which runs north from Lake Louise for 230 km up to Jasper in [Jasper National Park](#). This was the real highlight to us. The scenery was of snow covered mountains and many glaciers, with rivers finding their way, running wild through the valleys and often feeding beautiful lakes.

Although the road reached an altitude of over 2'000 meters above sea level, we drove on a more or less straight valley highway. Every now and then, we, or cars in front of us, spotted some wildlife, mainly grazing along the roadside. Somehow it felt like driving on a popular alpine safari track. Apart from bighorn sheep, we

also saw Mule Deer (called Elk in Canada) with beautiful big antlers, white longhaired mountain goats and the most exciting to us: a black bear sow with her brown cub. Along the way, there were many possibilities to go to lookouts or hiking trails. Peyto- and Hector Lake were the prettiest; the first one had a beautiful turquoise colour, which resulted from the glaciers crushing stones. The biggest concentration of glaciers coming together in various valleys was in the Columbia Icefield, made accessible to tourists by special 4 WD vehicles. This had been so commercialised, the departure hall above the giant parking lot that could hold 100 busses and an uncountable number



of cars, had several departure gates, in fact, it rather looked like an airport from the inside. Tourists from around the world could experience in sandals and shorts, how cold the ice feels and take some white pictures.

The next 4 days, we stayed in [Jasper](#), which was the first place, where many private houses offered rooms for rent and funny, we ended up staying with a nice Swiss Lady, who had immigrated 36 years ago to Canada. From here, we went out daily to explore the highlights of the surroundings. The most impressive to us were: Medicine + Maligne lake, Mount Edith and its glacier, the valley of 5 lakes and Mt. Robson.

## West Edmonton Mall

When we left the mountains towards Edmonton, we saw a last bear, plus several big deer, along the roadside. We stopped at the once world biggest shopping center, the [West Edmonton Mall](#). We were less impressed by the number of shops that apparently is 800, than by its amusement and leisure parks, fitted into the mall corridors. There was a big swimming pool with waterslide and wave machine, ice skating rink, a minigolf and a big funfair. A section of an artificial sea with coral and shipwrecks was built up, on which a replica of the Santa Maria sailing boat throned. Several submarines and at that moment, a scuba-diving team took the chance to explore the artificial underwater world.

However, there was only one supermarket and that was a very special one; it was purely Chinese, with probably less Western products on offer, than any big supermarket in China would have. So, we tried to make the best of it, finding fresh bread made with pumpkin, pineapple, coconut or mango. For a change, that was quite delicious.

## Naturist-Club Helios

Somehow, we didn't feel like stopping in Edmonton downtown and so we drove straight on, to [Helios Nudist Club](#), 50 km east.

As on any other campground in this country, almost all of the guests arrived with a campervan, they are known here as "RV's", which stands for "Recreation Vehicle". Therefore, campgrounds are not equipped with fancy facilities for people with a basic tent, as for example with kitchen, shop or snack-bar. But Helios Club Members went out of their way to accommodate us, quickly giving a finishing touch to their rental-caravan.

Within an hour, they brought in a fridge, which they placed in the forest, because the one in the trailer wasn't working. As the light was only designed to run on a battery of 12 Volt, somebody quickly extended the wire, so that we could connect it to our car. We also got a spare battery, for the case that the one of our car would go flat. Everybody gave us a very warm welcome and we started to enjoy the club's outdoor hot tub and heated pool. We were told, we could also use the sauna, if we didn't mind to heat the oven with wood. As we asked, when it usually runs, we learned, that it hadn't been used for the last 3 years! Hein|z thought; "then it's about time" and announced that he would gladly heat it up in the evening. So, we informed everybody that was staying Sunday night, the sauna would be on. By the time we came up to the "Aqua-Center", as they called it, somebody already had cleaned it out and lit the fire. There were about a dozen people showing up, taking advantage of the rare occasion.

When we went out shopping the next day, we tried to find some bread that was not yet sliced and packed in plastic bags. The Lady from the supermarket IGA's bakery department helped us. She found a solution by selling us frozen dough's that they usually bake up themselves and we even got them for the wholesales price.



The only trouble was, we hadn't made sure beforehand, that our caravan's gas-stove oven was working. So, the next morning we had this beautifully risen dough and tried desperately to make the oven run – but sure enough it didn't!

Luckily, our neighbour Paul, a young dropout who lives permanently at Helios, could solve the problem and from now on, we had fresh bread daily.

Considering that it apparently often still snows at the end of May, the weather spoiled us now and it was warm and sunny and that's why we finally stayed on for more than a week. Daily, somebody invited us for a drink to his or her site or cabin and it was very sociable. Here we felt even more hospitality than before in very friendly Canada.

## **Lonely Saskatchewan**

Leaving this real Naturist-heaven, we visited [\*\*Drumheller\*\*](#) next, an area famous for its finds of dinosaur fossils and its unique sandstone formations, called hoodoos. They formed in a dry washed out canyon, in an otherwise very flat environment.



Driving east for many hundred kilometres, the green flat and treeless prairie started becoming boring and so was the city of [\*\*Saskatoon\*\*](#), the capital of Saskatchewan Province.

Apparently, there were 230'000 inhabitants, but we hardly saw a soul on the street. Although it was sunny 27 degrees on that day and there was a Jazz-Festival on, everybody seemed to hide inside their apartments after 8 pm, as if it still was snowing - as it did on June 1st. The city center itself wasn't charming to us and it had neither restaurants, nor

entertainment venues in downtown. It rather looked like an assembly of many industrial quarters, spreading out in each direction. Even out in the suburbs, everything closed early, as in small countryside villages. This was the Canada of the white people who had been born here and who contended with greasy fast-food, mostly not even taking time to sit down to eat, but rather ordered their crap from their cars on the "drive through counter" and then munching it down whilst driving off. Here, "fast-food pollution" reached its peak. Those who did take a little time to sit down in a restaurant, were always three times faster than us. They were ordering huge portions, of which they took home the left-over in doggy-bags, so they had a quick feed the next day again. No wonder, that size XL, XXL and XXXL is readily available.

## **Winnipeg**

Continuing our way for another two days through endless flat Manitoba prairies, we visited the sand dunes of Spruce Wood Provincial Park, which is rather unusual to this part of the world, so far inland. In the rain, we reached [\*\*Winnipeg\*\*](#), a city we liked again. If you hear, that we found good restaurants that stayed open until 2 o'clock or even 4 o'clock in the morning, you may think, that was it, that pleased us, but it wasn't only that! This city was again multicultural blended and even at midnight, the streets were much livelier, than they were in Saskatoon at 7 pm. What we found special, were the many over- and under-passes that connected almost all the office buildings and shopping malls in the down town area. As winters get so bitterly cold (-40°C), it's certainly pleasant for the people to move from their workplace to the shops, restaurants, then to the cinemas or the library and back to the parking lot, all indoors.

On the first two nights at the hostel in Winnipeg, it was very quiet. But then some very interesting people checked in and everyone got along pretty well. A young Canadian decided to "cook" Sushi for everybody, so at about midnight, all the preparations were done and a dozen people had a late-night dinner, which ended at 4

o'clock in the morning. Some of the people were older than us, others only half our age and quite punky, but we all had a great time, sharing stories from Canada, England, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands.

## Naturist-Club Crocus Grove

After 5 days, we left to **Crocus Grove Nudist Camping** about 70 km north of the city. This club is superbly equipped with sauna, hot-tub (indoor), a heated swimming-pool and a generous club-house with a communal kitchen that was even suitable to cook for big events. You just have to bring your own groceries, as the next proper food-store is more than 40 km away. Or, there is a restaurant just 2 km from Crocus Cove at the local golf club. There were mainly fast-food type items on the menu, as often in the Canadian countryside, but what they served, was surprisingly good as everything was freshly prepared. One thing we didn't consider, when we returned a second time, was that they closed already at 8 in the evening, as often away from the big cities. Back in the club, we cooked the last Spaghettis and later enjoyed the Aqua center. We stayed in a little cabin and enjoyed it to be with the very hospitable friendly 'bares' and talked to almost all the Club-Members that were present. We just didn't like the wildlife, which was abundant during our visit: the very famous Royal Canadian Mosquito! Those nasty animals followed us in swarms and loved it that everyone here exposed the maximum flesh but they really drove us off, after a few days.

## First impressions of Ontario: almost as in the Finish Lake District

It wasn't far to the Ontario border, but it was striking, how suddenly the scenery changed. The flat fields gave way to a forest and lake rich area that resembled Finland. Funny it had attracted many Finish immigrants, naming their settlements: Finmark, Atikokan, Lappe or even Suomi and Finland. We were delighted, to hear that they had also brought along the tradition of smoking fish, to which we couldn't resist. Also, the sauna habits were the same as customary in Finland, where people go with their friends in the nude, but never with strangers in a public place. Many owned a sauna-moekki (cottage) on a lonely lake. Some apparently were accessible only by water-plane, which could be chartered throughout this region. Our first stop in this area, was in the fishing resort of **Nestor Falls**, which was particularly popular with American tourists, due to its proximity to the US border. By coincidence, Heinz wore his old T-Shirt with the antiwar slogan "If war is the answer, the question must be fucking stupid" and the Canadians, who served all these Americans just loved it.



From **Thunder Bay**, the road came close to the five great lakes. First, it followed Lake Superior for several hundred kilometres. We made another overnight-stop in a Motel in **Wawa**, where we had the first day with fog in the morning and again in the evening (June 13, 2004). Later, along Lake Huron, we crossed Georgian Bay on a two hours ferry ride to make a shortcut towards Toronto.

## Naturist-Ground Glen Echo

With Good Luck, we got a small apartment at **Glen Echo**, a naturist park in the north of town. We felt ripe for a week's holiday of our travels and this was a perfect oasis for this. It had many indoor facilities, as a big swimmingpool, a Jacuzzi with the most powerful jet we've ever enjoyed and a sauna that was (automatically) heated three times a week. Upstairs, there was a big games- and reading area with 3 ping-pong tables, a pool table, dart and tablesoccer. Glen Echo had big lawns for sunbathing and a beautiful pond with a tiny island.

The campsites were dotted around the forest that surrounded the Club but they had no power. We could walk the trails through the forest, even out to the fields which we enjoyed, as not many mosquitoes were at our pursuit.

The weather was always warm, which unfortunately provoked thunderstorms every day, but one. Unusual to us, it mostly started around lunchtime, and sometimes arrived within only 5 minutes to previously blue skies. At one stage, there was so much rain, the pond overfilled and flooded. The hillside lawn soon looked like a waterfall and the children's playground was suddenly in the middle of a big river.

One day, we visited [Toronto](#), Canada's biggest city, as a daytrip from Glen Echo. Even though we had a day pass for the public transport, our feet felt very flat by the evening. We got the impression, that the city center was rather businesslike than touristy, with the 533 Meters high CN Tower, being probably the most famous building.

## Niagara Falls

After Glen Echo, we left to [Niagara Falls](#) on the border to the United States. The quickest way to reach it,

was to take "Highway QEW", that didn't have or need a number, as it stands for "Queen Elizabeth Way"... In this area, the first British immigrants were probably already very homesick by the time they arrived here, as they named their newly founded settlements London, of course with a river Thames and a Hyde Park, Hamilton, Windsor and also Stratford on a river, now called Avon. After only two hours, we reached Niagara Falls, which were really impressive, especially the horse shoe falls on the Canadian side.

On the same side of the Niagara River, the tourist industry was truly exaggerated, which was reflected in the many high rise buildings that were mainly luxury hotels and casinos.



Driving back to Toronto and on to Ottawa, we passed many expanding villages that had sometimes giant new housing developments under way. They either were built as terrace houses or as detached villas and the rows of houses could go on and on. All looked almost the same and they all were built in wood only, often decorated by a thin brick facade, to make them look solid.

## Ottawa

In [Ottawa](#) we made an experience, we hope we otherwise won't make it ever again, in our lives: we stayed in jail! Actually, it has now become a Youth Hostel. We had a good laugh on our way there, when the driver stopping besides us on a red traffic light, seeing that we had a map on our lap, asked us helpfully, whether we knew where we were going. How to explain to somebody in just 5 seconds, that we wanted to go to the prison?

Canada's capital is a beautiful city with many government buildings built after French historical architecture. As this city stands right on the border to Québec, there was a strong French influence visible to this bilingual town. There was a huge market and many



stylish restaurants or street cafés, where people gathered until late at night. Here they enjoyed their time and didn't rush out of the restaurant as soon as they had swallowed the last bite.

Crusty baguettes could be found everywhere in the centre, along with fresh cheese, fruit and vegetables. But only a few hundred metres out in the suburbs, it still looked like in English-Canada, with all its fast-food chains.

## Naturist-Ground Loisirs Air Soleil

Now came the time to experience, whether Québec, Canada's French speaking province is really all that different as we always had heard.

As the weather-forecast now on the end of July, predicted some warm and sunny weather, we wanted to take advantage a little longer and opted to stay on another naturist ground, of which there were 9 to choose from between Montréal and Québec City (250km apart). All of which had a Website in French and English, plus a restaurant, which seemed to indicate that naturism here is much more popular than in English-Canada.

We picked [Loisirs Air Soleil](#) in Drummondville, 80 km east of Montréal. To ask beforehand for directions, would not have been necessary as there were big signs as from the highway through several small villages. Later we learned, that it was the government, that had put them up - "quelle différence"! We hadn't seen something like that in English Canada, where they only put one small name in front of the gate. So they seemed to be more open about this here and the big number of people on the campground only confirmed this. Sure, it was a weekend still in school-holidays but we were surprised, how similar it looked here to the naturist grounds in France. Even during the week, there were still ten times more people staying, than we had seen in all three clubs together in Western Canada during weekends. Air Soleil didn't have 1-2 rental units only, but 15 and those were pretty full. With good luck, we could get the last "en-site van" that was available for the whole week.

Alternatively, they had about 40 campsites for visitors and some were "equipped" with a little private hut, containing a fridge and toilet. Altogether, they had around 350 sites taken by members who had either put their caravan there or built a house. More sites were being added. Unlike in Western Canada, we saw many young families with kids and many youths that obviously felt very comfortable in this environment, as the camp offered many activities. The only restriction was: "No noise BEFORE 10 A.M.!" and not "after 10 p.m." as in the r(w)est of the world...



In the newly developed part of the campground, an indoor pool and Jacuzzi had recently been opened, a perfect amendment to the heated outdoor swimming pool, mini-shop and Snack bar, Restaurant. That restaurant was very cheap but didn't meet the otherwise much higher standard in Quebec.

The only unpleasant surprise was the language. As we both spoke some French, we were quite puzzled when we realized that we didn't understand a single thing, as Québécois sounds really quite different to European French. Here they had two employees in a professional reception and the one of them that spoke English made sure that every English speaker on the campground got to know about our presence. On the next day, Robert came round in his golf cady and showed us around the huge ground, which also consists of a big area with unspoilt nature. He also introduced us to many Québécois that were capable of speaking English and some Americans. Further, there were some of his family members that belonged to the club as well. Soon, we felt that here in French Canada many naturists had the same open attitude, telling their friends and family how much they enjoyed the club and that's probably why the acceptance and popularity is increasing here, while it is declining in the rest of the country.

Among those people we had met, were Olga and Steve, an American couple that chose to become members of Air-Soleil because they felt, that all the American camps they visited were too quiet and boring, despite the language of which they meanwhile master quite a bit. After chatting for an hour, they spontaneously invited us for dinner after which we sat around a campfire till late. We talked about our lives and learned, how they and many other Americans feel ashamed about the Bush-Government and also the whole business of suing each other for money on the most stupid reasons.

The next day, we got an invitation to go fishing but we could talk ourselves out of it but arranged to share the meal of their success...

When we showed them a copy of 'Naturist Life' with a story of us, they spontaneously said, there should be some other people in the photographs and offered to have their picture taken. The same evening Robert and Steve came back to our caravan starting a lengthy story on the modalities to take pictures on the camp. Both of us got the impression, there was trouble ahead, and we would probably be asked to delete all the photos we had taken, as it had happened before in some place, where an official club-photographer took the same pictures - just of the two of us, again - exactly the same way we had done them, except that he took these close-up's so close, that you surely can not recognize anything of that club around us. After that, two board-members had to approve them, before the pictures were e-mailed to us 3 weeks later... But the same thing didn't happen here in Air-Soleil - we were now in Québec! In a long story, we were being informed that the pictures of the afternoon were all right, but they had decided that we should show how family-oriented and lively this place is and therefore, they wanted to call other members and their children together to pose for some pictures. By coincidence on the next day, a professional photographer for naturism, Richard West, showed up. Needless to say he was interested in taking such pictures as well. When the owner of the campground was finally asked for permission, he didn't agree to such a short noticed photo-session, as he had had a lawsuit in the past and wanted to make sure that everyone had a disclaimer form filled in and signed beforehand. A few weeks later, the disclaimer forms were out and a photo session could be held. Although we were long gone by then, Richard, and also Olga & Steve sent us more than enough photos to show the family oriented atmosphere at Air-Soleil .

We enjoyed our 10 days at this club with its many animations that included Petanque, Tennis, horseshoe-throwing, Volleyball or in the evening: a theatre and song-games (of which we unfortunately didn't understand a thing...) Furthermore, since at virtually every site one or two golf caddies were parked, they had organized a race with these. It wasn't the teenagers only that drove like Kamikaze pilots down the steepest sand hills! Within the domaine, was a big gravel-pitch and there were also forest trails that was usually driven on with these caddies and they led to a beautiful swamp with a beaver dam and to a river.

## Montréal

After 9 days at Air Soleil we left to visit Joe Beelen, Brigitte's former Boss, who lives now again in [Montréal](#). We have last met him at Costa Natura, where he had had his first naturist experience in 2002. He really loved it and he made us laugh with his spontaneous comment "I can't believe how civilized all those people are here". He might have expected a bunch of Hippies.

As it was very hot in his apartment, he didn't mind, if we sometimes stripped off. But as Shizue, Joe's new Japanese partner didn't feel comfortable with this, we thought we better hop into our cloths again after the morning toilet, otherwise we felt we might promote a crisis in their relationship. Unlike other Asian immigrants to Canada, her way of thinking has changed



little from traditional Japanese mentality and she doesn't have the self-confidence to admit to her Japanese friends and relatives, that she now "partly" lives a western life.

We were shown around their neighbourhood and were delighted to find that in branches of the same supermarket chains we got to know in English Canada, the choice of food here was so much different, bigger and better. Especially in the fresh food and deli department we felt like being back to France, not only because mainly French was spoken around us. A big selection of cheese was on offer, local produce as well as many imported varieties from all over Europe, none of them cheap. There was an impressive selection of paté and also a lot of fish and life-seafood.

On the sweet side, they didn't only have three standard chocolate bars but also a big tempting selection imported from Belgium, France and Switzerland. Just next to the supermarket, there was "Marché de l'ouest" a huge covered outdoor market and mall, selling any fruit and vegetable available and there were several meat counters selling also "magret de canard" (ducks breast) as well as a poissonnerie. To make paradise perfect, there were also many bakeries, selling crusty hot bread some of which had a variety of 40 different types of bread and none of it was "killed" upon coming out of the oven by slicing and packing it in plastic bags! Furthermore, there was a mouthwatering selection of cakes, pastries and croissants. Seeing and tasting of course, the high quality the bakeries had on offer, we found it was quite exaggerated that some supermarkets imported dough's for baguettes, pain au chocolat and the like from France and baked them up on the premises.

Joe and Shizue showed us around many pleasant sights of the city, from the beachside boulevard down on the St. Lawrence river up to Mont Royal lookout. What also impressed but depressed us, was the visit to the state run casino. Here thousands of gamblers flocked voluntarily in to get separated from their money and to make big donations to the government. It was the same sort of people, we felt, who would raise their voice very loudly, if the government had risen taxes just for a couple of Dollars more. Contrary to common believe, people were not dressed up at all. Most of them were either in their sixties, retired or belonged to the lower income class. Many of them were obviously addicted to gambling.

It's amazing what little promise in Good Luck is necessary to lure people into dropping buckets full of coins into those slot-machines or spilling money like tap water on the tables. It was somehow shocking to see how easy

it is to make the masses believe what is right or wrong. If you are addicted to a drug that either pours money into the government or has a strong lobby you are perfectly acceptable, whereas if you are addicted to another drug that neither brings in money nor has a lobby, you are considered as being criminal. Is our society not smart enough to tell things apart and realize how much is being manipulated?

We went downtown several times by ourselves to discover the city of Montréal. This was a very "happening" city with lots of festivals drawing people to the streets and to the many street-cafés and restaurants. Everybody strolled along the harbour on a warm Sunday afternoon. For us it's hard to believe, that this big river freezes every winter for 5-6 months.

We also heard, that between autumn and spring temperatures can sometimes drop by 30 degrees Celsius in only two hours.

One evening, we went out with Edith & Ioran, a Spanish/Dutch couple that was here now and whom we had met in the hostel in Winnipeg on that famous Sushi-night. That was the only evening, we ate out, as every other night we were spoiled by Shizue's Japanese cooking.

We left Montréal eastwards along the St. Lawrence river which was lined by villas and holiday cottages, some had not only a boat, but also a waterplane mooring on their pier.



## Naturist-Ground Nature-Détente

On Aug. 12th we arrived at "[Nature-Détente](#)", a naturist camp near Québec City. Again we were surprised how many people were there mid week. Apart from their 250 campsites, some chalets and caravans could be rented and there was hotel-style accommodation with about 20 rooms linked to their indoor center. That building consisted of several sections, housing a TV room, a pool-table, another with sauna, jacuzzi and a small lounge, then the big hall with a swimming pool, two big lounge areas, dance floor, a shuffle board, a bar plus adjoining it: a restaurant which seated 80 guests. As the entire indoor center was heated to 26 degrees, it was bustling with people until at least midnight during weekdays and much longer on weekends, when they always have some animation. We were impressed that after the restaurant closed at about 10-11 p.m., everything else kept running and we enjoyed it together with the other guests, to use Sauna and Spa, afterwards cooling off with a dip in the pool and a drink at the bar, just before going to bed.

We took advantage of the "forfait" (special package) that included the room and two meals a day for \$ 90 per couple or \$ 480 for a week (Euro 55/290). For a single it would have cost \$ 70 or 365 per week (Euro 42/220).

Ronald, the chef cooked with devotion. On the first look, his menu appeared rather simple but he did usually add three "plats du jour" as daily specials. Everything was always prepared fresh and with love, decorated with fruits or salads and even eating "a la carte" was not expensive. Also in the restaurant, nudity was the norm which meant that we never needed any garment during the entire week we stayed. No matter how mean the weather might be, in "Natur Détente's" indoor center there is always enough to do and nudity is natural all day and night.

This does not mean that it's not nice outside as well - if it is... They have a swimming pond with a sandy beach, which became very crowded on the weekend when we were there. Then, people also took over the Volleyball and pétanque fields, played minigolf or threw horse shoes or went for a long hike on a forest trail. There was also a "Maison de jeunesse" in a separate building, plus an outdoor kiosk with snackbar. Presently, the center is open from May until September daily and every weekend during the winter. The owners have extension plans and probably by the time you read this, a Thalasso therapy healthcenter and more rooms will be added, thus allowing "Détente" to remain open daily year round. Already now, winter weekends are so popular, you need to book long ahead if you want to stay for the night, not only for a day.

We found quite a few people, guests and employees, that spoke English or even German, while we tried to work on getting used to what makes Québécois so different from European French, as the written language (at least) is fortunately not all that different.

## Québec

After a nice nude week, we left to [Québec City](#). This town was really a jewel surprising us with its fortified old city that claims a place in the world heritage list. To us, it looked very European or to be more precise: very French, but with clean public toilets and without the dog-shit on the pavement... The down town (or rather uptown) had many old buildings and was packed with tourists from all over the world. With its uncountable number of souvenir shops and restaurants, it reminded us a lot of French Sarlat-la-Canéda in the Dordogne.

We know that the people of Québec are very proud of their identity and they don't like to be compared with the French, however, we don't see what could be wrong with that, since everybody who has seen English Canada knows about the different way of life here.

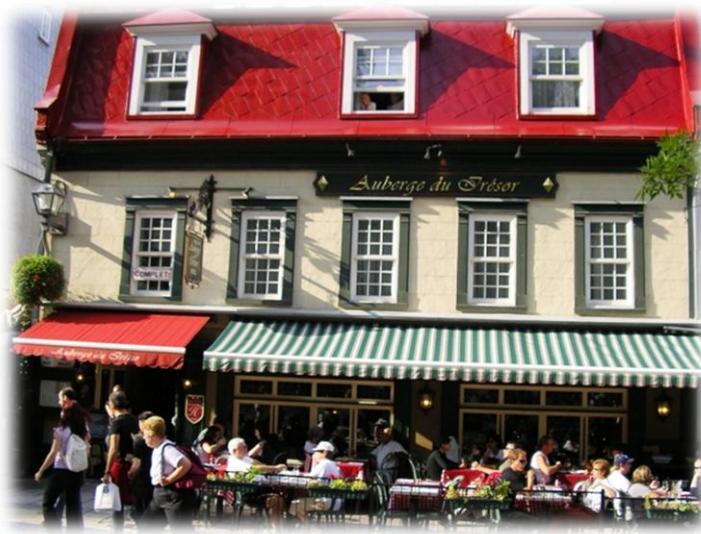
Separatists or not, it feels like Québec is another country! Of course, it would not make sense, if Québec would separate from Canada.

We couldn't help seeing so many striking similarities in the way how they live and behave, how they built their cities and even more by reading the menus of the restaurants.



Usually the meal consisted of at least three, sometimes up to 12 courses, which takes in the whole evening, not like in Western Canada, where people often manage to order, eat and pay for a five-course set-menu,

within 20 minutes only, especially at Chinese Restaurants.



Sorry to come back to France: in Toronto a Canadian, speaking of his past holidays couldn't believe how long everybody had to sit in the restaurant until all courses were being served and the most amazing he said " nobody complain about it!"

In all of Québec food came in small often nicely decorated portions and dogy bags are unheard of. The food was described in a bloomy way consisting of items as "magret de canard, foie gras, riz d'agneau or chèvre chaud, terrine or paté as starters and not only the fish was swimming in a sauce. Needless to say, that we enjoyed any aspect of this beautiful city.

Luckily, this summer was exceptionally warm, so we decided to reveal our body to the sun again. Now we chose "[Le Cyprès](#)", a 300 ha naturist camping along a river, where we hoped to do some extensive walking, canuding and cycling. Although we got there, we never got to know the grounds. Despite having reserved a cabin by telephone only 6 hours prior to our arrival, the Lady on the reception couldn't remember us and had given away all the cabins. As she neither cooperated to find another solution nor apologized, we decided to clear off and go to "[Nature-Détente](#)" again instead, which was less than 50 km away.

Being unlucky at first, turned into Good Luck again as the restaurant, from where we phoned to find out whether "Nature Détente" had some space for us, was a real Gourmet Temple, so we decided to eat there beforehand.

As it was Saturday evening, there was still some animation going on at the naturist camp by the time we arrived and we took advantage of the sauna and spa on the same night still.

For another three days we enjoyed the club's superb facilities and Ronald's great restaurant.

## Naturist-Ground **Cité du Soleil**

As the next heat-wave was moving in, we wanted to discover yet another naturist camping: "[Centre Naturiste Cité du Soleil](#)" near Lac St. Jean further north. To get there, we drove through an area that consisted mainly of thick pine forest and lakes. This naturist camping might be small, but it was very personal and beautiful. Considering that it is in the middle of the Saguenay region, which is bigger than Switzerland but has only 300'000 inhabitants, it's amazing that it was still more busy than some grounds near English-speaking Canada's big cities.

All 12 tourist offices in the surrounding of "Cité du Soleil" distributed its brochure and the camping also advertised regularly on the local and regional radio stations. We learned that almost all of Québec's naturist grounds advertise that way. Even more amazing for North-America: a weekly local newspaper showed a big picture from a couple on their front page in an article featuring that ground, they were depicted from the back but plain nude. "Cité du Soleil" had about thirty campsites, and some more under construction. There was a swimming pool, pétanque course and only there, we found a very pretty little *natural* lake with a pedalo boat and a float for the guests use. Brigitte loves boating, so her captain Heinz had to find out how to steer the bloody thing!

The very friendly owners Elise and Jean-René invited us to see and later to eat moose, after we told them, that we had seen almost all Canadian wildlife, except those. As a hunter, Jean-René knew a lot about Moose, he was even able to call them, although when we went out with him to the forest, we could hear the moose but it didn't make any appearance. However, the meat from the animal he hunted last winter, tasted just great.

Now we understood French better up here, either we got adapted or it was more Parisian what they spoke. We rented a caravan where we did some home-cooking and visited one of the gastronomic places around.

## Blue whales near Tadoussac

Our urge to be tourists as well and not "just" naturists finally succeeded, as we learned it's now just the best time to see whales down in [Tadoussac](#) on the conjunction of the Saguenay and St. Lawrence rivers. Here the saltwater that's being pushed up St. Lawrence Bay at high tide mixes with the freshwater and thus creating a giant natural hatchery for krill, the small shrimps on which the big whales feed here all summer long on a location more than 1'300 km away from the wide open sea. The biggest whales, the bluewhale can measure up to 27 meters and weigh up to 150 tons and eats up to 4 tons of krill each day.

At several points around Tadoussac it was possible to see the mammals from the rocks on the shore. They came only shortly up to the surface to breathe, before they dived down again. National park personnel were there to explain about the animals and we were lucky to see quite a few species each time we waited on the different observation points - it paid to be patient.

On our first day the weather was most beautiful and 26 degrees warm but it seemed as if autumn had arrived overnight. The next day, it was a cold 14 degrees wet and foggy. We stayed in a nice Gîte (B&B), where the Lady served us a great breakfast and in the evening we enjoyed the many French... so sorry; Québécois restaurants, which served gastronomic meat- and lobster dinners.

On a ferry, we crossed St. Lawrence river that was 40 km wide here at the height of Rimouski. From there, we drove further east all along the [Gaspe Peninsula](#). The road led right along the coastline and houses were dotted along the way continuously, but usually not enough, to make up villages. We stayed overnight in St. Anne and [Percé](#), the latter being a place that owes its fortunes entirely to a huge chunk of limestone with a hole in it. This was quite scenic but a bit overrated, we felt.



## New Brunswick

It rained, when we arrived in the Province of **New Brunswick**, where we still could follow the more or less steady, if sparsely populated coastal road. Even though it is bilingual here, with french represented by its Acadian population mainly along the east coast, there was obviously much more fast-food around again. We stopped in Bathurst and later in [Shediac](#), the self-proclaimed 'Lobster-capital of the world'. Of course, we couldn't resist and so we decided on behalf of two lobsters that it was their turn to end the free life they had led out in the Atlantic Ocean and to donate their tasty meat to us.

As we were staying in a very comfortable Bed & Breakfast, we went from there to see the famous [Hopewell Rocks](#) in the Bay of Fundy. These sandstone formations were being washed out by the world highest tides that are up to 17 meters here. At low tide, it was possible to walk on the "exposed ocean floor" and to have a closer look at the sandstone pillars, before they became "islets" again a few hours later.

As the weather promised to be unusually warm again in the next few days, we felt a bit more naturist life would please our body and soul. Back in mainly English speaking eastern Canada, there was only one club listed all over New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland but how to find it? A Web-Site showed only a list with names, rules and regulations (not very inviting) and a phone number but no address at all. As we had already experienced with another club in Western Canada, their phone was constantly directed to an answering machine, with the promise they would ring back within 24 hours. But as we are roving spirits, staying in Backpackers places and B&B's, they never rang us back, so we grimed and didn't bare it.

We assume, they just wanted to check their prospective members and visitors identification before ringing back but of course in our case, they could not do this. In another club we visited, it was no problem to stay as long as you wanted, if you were a foreigner owning an INF-card and it didn't matter whether you were single or a couple. Everybody was welcome up to three times (trial visits) and then you had to pay the annual fee to become a member, which was just a formality after you had brought along the required criminal records! The prudish attire in big parts of northern America and the business of suing drives some clubs to impose regulations that are not helping to make naturism more acceptable at all.

By the way, in none of the clubs in Québec, that had been clearly signposted for any outsider, we saw "hundreds of gawks queuing" at the gate, as some feared they would...

Outside naturist environments, people mostly were very prudish, in comparison with the UK or Europe. Just think about how much nudity of both genders is being shown in "Mr. Bean" and we saw that even in otherwise very prudish communist Vietnam, whereas in English speaking North America, "no way" they would show something like that on TV or in a cinema.

Another ironical example was an episode of the TV series with a candid camera: they tried to advertise for a video camera that allegedly could record cloths transparently. Wow, everybody said and afterwards had a very close look at the result on the video's screen. What did they see? Except the filmed persons underwear, all other clothing had indeed become invisible...

## Nova Scotia

From Shediac, we soon came to the province of **Nova Scotia**, which is almost an island and also has a bit of

French culture left. Also here, one of the people's main sources of income is fishery, in particular lobsters. Even Mc Donald's posted big signs along the road, proposing a lobster-sandwich and we were curious enough to try it. We must admit, we liked it - and even more, as they forgot to charge it!



As temperatures now started to plunge and jump, every time they rose to 15°C or more, shops started the aircon again - probably Canadian's are afraid to get used to warm weather. We, on the other hand, were thinking of the beach once more, especially as it got up to 26 degrees the next day. Even if there was no club for us to visit east of Quebec, there were still some cloth optional beaches.

So we drove out to a remote place near Inverness. As the road became very rough, we gave up on the last bit of off-road and started to walk. Not much later, some other tourists that were looking for a waterfall on the same spot, gave us a lift. Their vehicle was rented, so they didn't care as much about the car as we did... Both locations were hard to find, the waterfall was disappointingly small but the rocky beach was very picturesque and so we disrobed and had it all to ourselves after the others had left. It was nice to feel such a warm early September sun in this part of Canada, while at the same time in Edmonton, on the other side of the country, the weather forecast had predicted the first snow.

Cape Breton on the northern tip of Nova Scotia was fog-covered on its higher hills and we already considered turning back and wait for a nicer day. But then we were rewarded that we continued, because suddenly, we saw two Moose right by the roadside; a huge female and a young male. We were quite excited, as we had hoped to see such animals all across Canada.

On the other side of Cape Breton, the weather cleared up again and we soon drove in sunshine. The coastline looked different again here. On the northern side, there had first been farmland meeting the sea and higher up forested cliffs, whereas now, there were big pink granite rocks lining the shore.

Throughout Nova Scotia it was easy to find pretty B&B's as in Baddeck. Every now and then a village had emerged with various fine restaurants, thanks to the permanent presence of tourists that came mainly from the US at the time we were there. Oh yes, these fearless Americans that still had the guts to go abroad

independently were so different from those that stayed home. We heard them (the first ones) complain about "fast-food pollution" all over North America and fine dining was an important part of traveling for them, as for us.

Heinz felt, that things in Canada got a bit more similar to the US since he had been here 17 years ago. Mainly the attitude of suing, got hold in Canada as well, even though the demanded compensation sums remained still substantially lower. But everything you buy and any building you enter, bears big disclaimer stickers everywhere: mind your step, mind your head, slippery when wet (outside) ...

On some lakes, swimming was not permitted at all and everyone who was going on a boat was requested to wear a life jacket, children sometimes even had to wear them to swim in a pool. This resulted after ridiculous claims were laid against the owners of the grounds, after some accidents had happened...unofficially, because there was too much alcohol involved. Who is still responsible of himself? You should see the operating manual to our car; about one third describes what may happen, if you don't wear seatbelts, don't clean the windows, don't light headlights at night, don't walk behind your car before reversing or if you drive whilst drunk...this list goes on and on and you might wonder whether most car buyers won their driver's licence in a lottery and therefore the manufacturer of the vehicle has to tell you all of this garbage.

[Halifax](#) was a pleasant city with lots of tourists concentrating around the big harbour area, where earlier in summer, big cruise ships called in, making it even more bustling than it was now.

We stayed in a beautifully located B&B, not far from [Peggy's Cove](#). This was still a true fishing village that lay protected behind uncountable little islands. When we arrived, the fog just lifted.

Fog seems to be as abundant here as lobsters and not only in autumn. We were lucky to see the sun throughout the next days when we followed the southern coastline until its western tip at Yarmouth. The scenery was truly stunning and we liked it best of all, with its tidal swamps on one side of the road and its rugged islands out in the sea. There were some more pretty villages along the way, as [Lunenburg](#) and Shelburne that added to the charming character of this region.



## Back to New Brunswick

As soon as we came to the north shore, the scenery changed and in our opinion, was not quite as spectacular anymore. The road led us around the Bay of Fundy, that brought us back to the southern part of [New Brunswick](#) province. Caused by the high tides, the muddy chocolate brown rivers that meet the bay, added something special to this area too.

We stayed for a few days in a nice cottage in St. Martins, where we had a rest and continued writing the story you are reading now. The owners of the cottage also have a [Mini-horse farm](#) plus a "Bed & Breakfast" place. To our big surprise, they recommended us a lovely spot, where a freshwater-lake is almost meeting the ocean, separated only by a sandbar. This place could be reached after half an hour's walk and that's why it could be suitable for skinny dipping in summer, they mentioned. But it was a bit too cold when we were there.

Continuing our way, we sighted a big black bear crossing the highway just before reaching St. Andrews. We visited this lovely village with many colorful wooden houses clustered together, a rarity in Canada. The same day, we also made a sidetrip to Deer Island, which was already worthwhile for the pretty ferry-trip alone, as we sailed past a series of beautiful islands.

[Fredericton](#) and Woodstock were our next stops on our way north, along the very scenic [St. John River Valley](#). The first trees started to get autumn colors and Brigitte was so excited.

## Once again to the province of Québec

On our stop in Edmundston, we were already back in dominantly french speaking territory, even before reaching our favorite Province: **Québec** again.

Our high expectations were not disappointed. Even in the small village of Cabano, a 3000 souls place, where we stayed in a nice Gîte, we found two Restaurants serving "menues gastronomiques", several other good places to eat and not one of those "easy and greasy" fast-food chains were represented!

Another stop was [Rivière du Loup](#), before we continued westwards, along the St. Lawrence River's south shore. The scenery along the local road was quite beautiful all along the way until we reached the busy suburbs of [Québec City](#).

We didn't want to bypass this place without taking advantage of its "savoir vivre" again. So we had two more nights at the Youth Hostel, in a room that was cheap and two more gourmet-meals that were not...

We went to say "Hello" to Joe and Shizue in Montréal, just before continuing to Mt. Tremblant. This was the perfect time to dive into those famous autumn-colors of the Indian summer. We truly enjoyed this last destination, with its scenery of forested hills and lakes.



When we saw the touristy place of Mont Tremblant resort, we were quite astonished how many people had come to this ski-resort on Friday Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>, weeks ahead of the ski-season. The village had only been built 15 years ago by the same promoters that had also put Whistler on the map, even though by Swiss standards, ski slopes weren't that long. It offered more than any tourist would need, useful or not and people from around the world came by the busloads to see this artificial place.

After that, we returned to Montréal, where we could stay at Joe's apartment again. He was offering us a lot of help and facilities, so it was the perfect place to organize the sale of our car and a new onward-ticket.

## Final thought about our Canada-Trip

Our favourite provinces lay to the East and West edge of Canada, with the frontrunners being French influenced Québec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and also Ontario, plus on the west side it was British Columbia with Vancouver, influenced by Asians and the Rocky Mountain National Parks of Alberta. The center, we found rather dull but by crossing the country from west to east, it was possible to get an overall impression and to feel the differences that can be quite amazing from one province to the next. Each has its own traffic rules and regulations. If you're a qualified professional, it's not sure that your diploma will be recognized outside your own province. If they exceptionwise recycle, then there's plenty of different ways, how to do this.

Many recent immigrants from Europe confessed to us, that their expectations were a little disappointed. They did find freedom in unlimited space here, however, they felt real freedom and openness could easier be found in good old Europe. When they got to know some countrymates that immigrated maybe 30 years ago to Canada, the newcomers felt that the "oldies" got stuck here with their old traditions, habits and views, while people all over Europe continued to develop.

Although, the Canadian summer is much shorter than a summer in Europe, we had been quite lucky with the weather here. Now we have experienced, how big this country is and although we didn't make the "side-trips" to Yukon, Alaska and Newfoundland, as considered at first, we still made over 17'000 km on our car. With some Good Luck, we could sell this vehicle that had brought us across Canada without any problem, for only C\$ 250 less than we had bought it 5 months before.

And now, what's next? Well, just by coincidence, end of September we passed a farm where 3 Wallabies hopped around and we're gonna do this: We want to hop over several small islands in Micronesia, down to where we can see more of their big mates, and the Kangaroos.

# Dominican Republic: no problems inside the holiday ghetto!

Before that, we made a week's side-trip to visit our friend and former flat-mate Urs. He lives now mainly in the  [Dominican Republic](#), where his wife Teresa originated. They were officially separated for a few years, although depending on her mood, sometimes they were not. She died voluntarily one month ago and he had trouble understanding this and was even more suffering, as he is terminal ill with cancer. We tried to make him see our positive attitude towards death and eliminate his fear to die.

Our charter flight did not land on the airport close to his home and so he picked us up in Punta Cana 100 km east. The island was lush and green with incredible flowers on trees and bushes. The people lived in very colourful houses but mostly they were very poor. We were told that the three main sources of income, apart from tourism, are sugarcane, rice and coffee. Most Dominicans earn less than USD 150.-/month and Haitians from the other part of the island, who come here as guest-workers, are paid even less.

Urs owns a villa in the 27 km<sup>2</sup> holiday- and "rich people's" resort called "[Casa de Campo](#)". Although we were impressed by Urs' house, in comparison to many others of the approx. 1'200 villas, his was quite modest. The whole resort consisted of beautiful gardens and was safely fenced and guarded round the clock. There were uncountable pass-times on offer for the luxury-tourist, to enjoy this safe and worry-free oasis. There were 4 big golf courses, dozens of tennis courts and swimming pools, more than 200 horses to ride and a shooting range. On the sea, you could book sailing- and diving-courses and there were noisy jet boats for rent. For those that just wanted to relax on the beach, there was no need to bring a towel, as they were distributed for free and placed by servants on a sunbed, which they placed under the desired tree or sunshade.

After we saw how many black Dominicans work as servants of the rich upper class and the many white tourists, it reminded us of colonial times. Within 'casa de campo', and also in many similar resorts, each house creates at least two jobs, often more, for cleaners, watch-man, maintenance staff and the like. To distribute its thousands of employees to their respective working places, the resort operates its own big bus-network.

Considering the low income, we were shocked by the high prices of the few supermarkets. The same goods cost two or three times less in Canada!!! Still, we wondered why so many local people shopped there.

The prices in restaurants were even more out of this world, and in the resorts, it was the worst. Can you imagine how our appetite just vanished upon hearing that the price for a simple sandwich was a dreadful USD 25.-? This was more than a menu gastronomic would have cost in Quebec, where wages are at least 10 times higher than here!

The Dominican Republic is a poor country and the consecutive governments drive it even deeper into chaos and bankruptcy, because they use the money mainly to enlarge the government member's own wealth and for the army that is meant to protect them. The bulk of the population, on the other hand, lives in poverty. As the gap between rich and poor is immense, no wonder they have a big problem with crime. In many shops and on all construction sites, where they had more than three bricks laying around, we saw armed security guards. When our friend Urs went to the garage to have his car fixed, he routinely took his lawyer along, just to make sure no good parts were removed.

The only thing, Dominican women seem to be able to spare a few Pesos for, is for beauty-products that should make their skin bright and their curly hair straight.



Hair-rising, however, we felt was the behaving in traffic. We doubt they have rules, but if they do, they are just to be ignored and we were surprised how well Urs adapted to this dangerous game, as we have never seen him driving like this in Switzerland.

He showed us the area around La Romana, where we collected all these impressions, but when we were within the resort of 'Casa de Campo', it was as in a different world. The so-called Caribbean dream, to us, was neither in- nor outside the resort.

It was very interesting to meet Urs in this country and we have had some deep discussions during the week we spent there..

Air Transat's sardine-jet flew us back to **Montreal**, where we spent the last 3 days of **Canada** in the city center. Apart from closing our bank-account and picking up the next airline tickets, we met again with Edith, having some more interesting discussions over a meal à la Québécoise.

Brigitte & Heinz



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