



SA Jesters outbound tour to Canada

7 – 24 September 2016

DAY 0:

Life would be too easy if it all happened according to plan. Our intrepid band of Jesters tourists met at OR Tambo airport, sort of. First up, Cath de Groot, wife of our tour captain, had a somewhat checkered start to her tour. Passports left at check-in, and a big thank you to the kind fellow who came running after us waving our passports. Personal bag search at domestic departures in Cape Town, which is a rare bird indeed. Followed by a seat check in her designated seat, and then her requested window seat was the only window seat without a window. Things could only look up.

A fantastic meet-up with 83% of the touring party. 83%. The Bluck's were meeting us in London. Indifferent team attitude. All progress seamlessly through passport control, all going swimmingly as we make our acquaintances at Jackson's pub, until that one little voice of doubt. Lou Duys saying: "Aren't we meant to be boarding now?" Quizzical looks all around. It transpires that Pieter and Lou are actually on the SAA flight, not the BA flight, leaving some 40 minutes before the rest of us. Frantic scrambling from them, even leaving a half-empty beer bottle in the field. We must be thankful for our touring partners, to keep us in tow. The other eight of us board and depart without hassle. On to Halifax, via London.



DAY 1:

Rather miraculously, we all meet in Terminal 2 of Heathrow, and make our acquaintances. On to the 6 1/2 hour flight to Halifax, and we land in Canada, to be met by Ray Sochereau, Gail and Larry, and Neil Harvey, and whisked off to Ela's Greek Taverna for a bite to eat and a Dirty Blonde or two..... The craft beer type, of course. Also present at Ela's is Ray's wife Marguerite and Neil's wife Robyn, who manages the restaurant on behalf of another local Jester, Costa. Stunning food, and the Blonde was also far more stunning than dirty.... All sent off to our billets, and some much-needed R&R after some of the touring party have been traveling for some 30 hours, to recharge our batteries for the journey ahead.



DAY 2:

Most of the Jester's managed to make it to about 9pm local time, which equated to 2am SA time. Fine effort. And then about a 4:30am wake-up, so a little jet lag to manage. The morning was spent taking the Harbour Hopper tourist 'bus' around Halifax. The 'bus' was actually an amphibious vessel, so we not only saw Halifax by road, but also by sea. Quite spectacular. A wander around the Harbour before a traditional Halifax lunch including stuff like Lobster dip, and of course a few Murphy's ales to wash it down and we were ready for us first squash match. A stiflingly hot St Mary's University awaited us, but Willie Bucke got us off to a fine start at #7 against Tony Hall, winning 3-1. It appears no-one was more surprised than Willie. At 6, Pieter Duys was most jesterly in allowing the proprietor of yesterday's welcoming function at Ela's, Costa Elles, to win 3-1. Tracy Le Roux showed her mettle at 5 winning 3-0 against Janet McLeod, whilst Terry Owen, at 4, triumphed over Glen Rocket 3-1. Andrew Broom was a tad unjesterly by dispatching our host, Ray Souchereau 3-0, whilst Duncan de Groot sneaked in 3-1 against Mike Mills 3-1. Ryan Bluck was against a tough opponent in Josh Rudolph and went down in 3. So, 5-2 to our traveling squad. On to an amazing spread at Neil and Robyn Harvey's house, involving mussels, scallops, cedar planked salmon, 2 kegs of beer and about 400 bottles of wine. No wonder some of us only got home at 2:45am! But what a day....







DAY 3:

After saying farewell to our hosts, three of our new hosts, Marc Lalonde, Dave Ross and Dave Hotham transported us to Moncton, via Shediac Bay. A few photo snaps at a rather large lobster, and then off to a Wharf Jump. 10 of the 12 of us took the leap, in to gloriously warm water, which was exactly what the doctor ordered after a rather late night. After flailing around in the water for a while, we took the edge off at the Sandbar, for a Cerveza or three. Then it was on to Bill and Donna Stewart's across the bay for a stunning sunset and amazing pulled pork courtesy of Chris Lesperance and a most intricate Jester's cake. The attention to detail is astounding. An early night this time, finishing off with a nightcap at our hosts Chris and Sue at 1am. Onward and upwards.









DAY 4:

After a sumptuous breakfast we headed across to Hopewell Rocks, part of the Bay of Fundy. There is a 34 foot change in sea level based on the tides, so at low tide, you are literally walking on the ocean floor. Quite spectacular. After a quick lunch of seafood chowder and lobster rolls, it was off to our second match of the tour at Moncton Squash Club. Willie Bucke is like a trusty diesel engine. Once you get him warmed up, he'll keep going for hours. And so he did, taking down Dave Hotham, in a battle of the heavyweight division, 3-1. Pieter Duys is up against it at the moment, taking on all the players who are running scared of Tracey. In Halifax that was Costa, and in Moncton it was Marc Lalonde, a player of some note in his time. A spirited fight by Pieter, but 3-0 to Marc. Tracey Le Roux took on Justin Saulnier, and continued her strong form to win 3-1. Terry Owen took on Tom Evans, and also came through in 4. We need to work on Andrew Broom's jesterly spirit, as he once again won in 3 straight games, this time against Andrew Creaghan. The Moncton Jesters imported a South African from Prince Edward Island in Lester Jinks to play against Duncan de Groot. If we are fair, Lester has been in Canada for 30 years, so he is probably verging on Canadian now. Having gone 2-0 up, Duncan showed Andrew how to do the Jesterly thing and allowed Lester back in to the match. It was a long drive from PEI, after all. However, this backfired spectacularly as Lester ran Duncan in to the ground, eventually triumphing in 5. Ryan Bluck then notched his first W of the tour, winning 3-1 against Mike Rintzler. One of the really neat touches was the television screen welcoming all of us by name, and also including South African cities current weather forecasts, in case some of us were getting homesick.

After a few Molson Canadian's for medicinal and recovery purposes, of course, it was on to mix and match doubles also involving Jim Pomeroy, Chris Lesperance, Sue Mollins and Dave Ross. Duncan almost caused an international incident by asking for a Moosehead beer, whilst standing next to Jim Pomeroy, the recently retired Brewmaster of Molson Canadian and Coors. Apparently Moosehead is from a rival brewery! Duncan managed to redeem himself in Jim's eyes by drinking Molson Canadian with gay abandon until the small hours of the following morning. On to dinner at Marc and Lynn Lalonde, for an 'intimate' sit down dinner. Well, if we can call 35 people intimate. What spectacular fare - enough mussels to sink the Harbour Hopper, lobster and Arctic Char, washed down with plentiful beer and wine. The hospitality was superb, as it has been throughout the tour so far. The SA Jesters trotted out their first attempt at a team song. It is perhaps best termed a work in progress. We should have it down pat by Vancouver. An early night for some, as in early the next morning, although Ryan and Ilka Bluck went out for a spot of karaoke singing with Dave Hotham until the even more wee hours. A slightly droopy eyed bunch boarded the flight to Montreal. The good news is all 12 are still present and accounted for, which is more than we can say for our waistline.... Onwards and upwards to Montreal.....







DAY 5:

After a gentle breakfast of about a dozen blueberry pancakes and smoked bacon, washed down with a rather intricate morning after the night before smoothie, it was off to the airport for the expected 24 minute flight to Montreal, until we were gently reminded by the locals that there was a 1-hr time change, meaning our flight was indeed 1 1/2 hours. 3 of the 12 tourists were subjected to the full body X-ray machine going through security. We were slightly concerned when Verity appeared to almost be ushered to a private room for an additional security check, but alls well that ends well. A slightly bumpy approach in, but all landed safely and all 12 accounted for, to be met by Dennis Bishop and his trusty 2 i/c Esther Mettier. Whisked straight off to Ross and Marie Bradley's house for some traditional smoked meat from Schwartz's - a Montreal institution - and poutines. Before too long the beer and wine was flowing, and Willie was settling in to the couch - as this was his home for the next two nights. A quick swing past our new hosts to drop off our luggage and then off to Club Atwater for our first attempt at hardball doubles. What a fun game! Similar in some ways, but quite different in others. Off then to dinner at Bart and Sue Sambrook's house, just down the road from the club, to be met by more local Montreal Jester's. We are improving - we got home about 12:30am.



DAY 6:

The morning was spent on a guided tour of old Montreal, with our quintessentially French guide Frederic. It really was fantastic to have such a knowledgeable guide explain old Montreal to us. The dichotomy - there's a big word for a Tuesday... - between French and English is quite marked, with statues and buildings being erected specifically to contrast each other. Lunch was a splendid affair at Jardin Nelson, and then it was off to our afternoon match. To put this in cricketing parlance, our middle order pulled us through, with disappointing results for our top order and our tail end. Notable was Pieter Duys cracking a result when it really mattered, and Tracey winning 11-9 in the 5th. All said and done, squash was the winner. Cough, cough. Dinner at Club Atwater, and I have rather stupidly brought a slim fit smart shirt with me for the evenings. I have started to wear it like a waistcoat now, with the bottom button undone. With the way we are being wined and dined most royally on this trip, Tracey reckons I will only have 1 button left buttoned by the time we finish the tour. The highlight of the evening was being addressed by Dick Pound, a Jester himself, and getting some insight in to the attempt to get squash in to the Olympics, as well as general feedback on what is happening in the world of doping in sport. A fascinating and special occasion.

A quick beer or three to taste the Montreal nightlife at Brutopia with Tracey, Ilka, Cathy, Broomy, Ryan and our host Keith Flavell, and off to bed at sometime after 1am. The trend seems to be going the wrong way again.... But what a wonderful time in Montreal along with our new friends including Michael and Judy Martin, Chris Pickwood, Beth Marchant and Ivars Sayfy.







DAY 7:

All 12 present and accounted for on the train, sir. Just. Dennis and Esther had to literally throw Willie down the escalator as he was cutting it a bit fine. But we all made it, and we are in our way to Toronto. A few hours to recharge the batteries before we are up and at 'em again.

I'd failed to mention that the hosts in Montreal had heard about Andrew Broom's ability on the squash court, and invoked that seldom seen, rare bird indeed, the tongue stinging wasp. We were enjoying a most pleasant lunch at Jardin Nelson, with Broomy tucking in most heartily to a Tex Mex pizza. Just as he was depositing said pizza in to his mouth, a wasp decided to join him, got somewhat of a fright when his exit route got blocked, and proceeded to sting Broomy on his tongue. As Broomy mentioned, that was the spiciest Tex Mex he had ever had. It failed to work, though, as Broomy continued his majestic form, swatting all and sundry aside. A selection committee meeting is in the offing. Consisting of me and myself. The train ride from Montreal to Toronto was brilliant, not least because we were royally treated to business class fare. We were wholly, inappropriately responsible on the way to Toronto, not taking nearly enough use of the drinks trolley. Perhaps a little R&R was called for, after such fantastic hospitality so far.

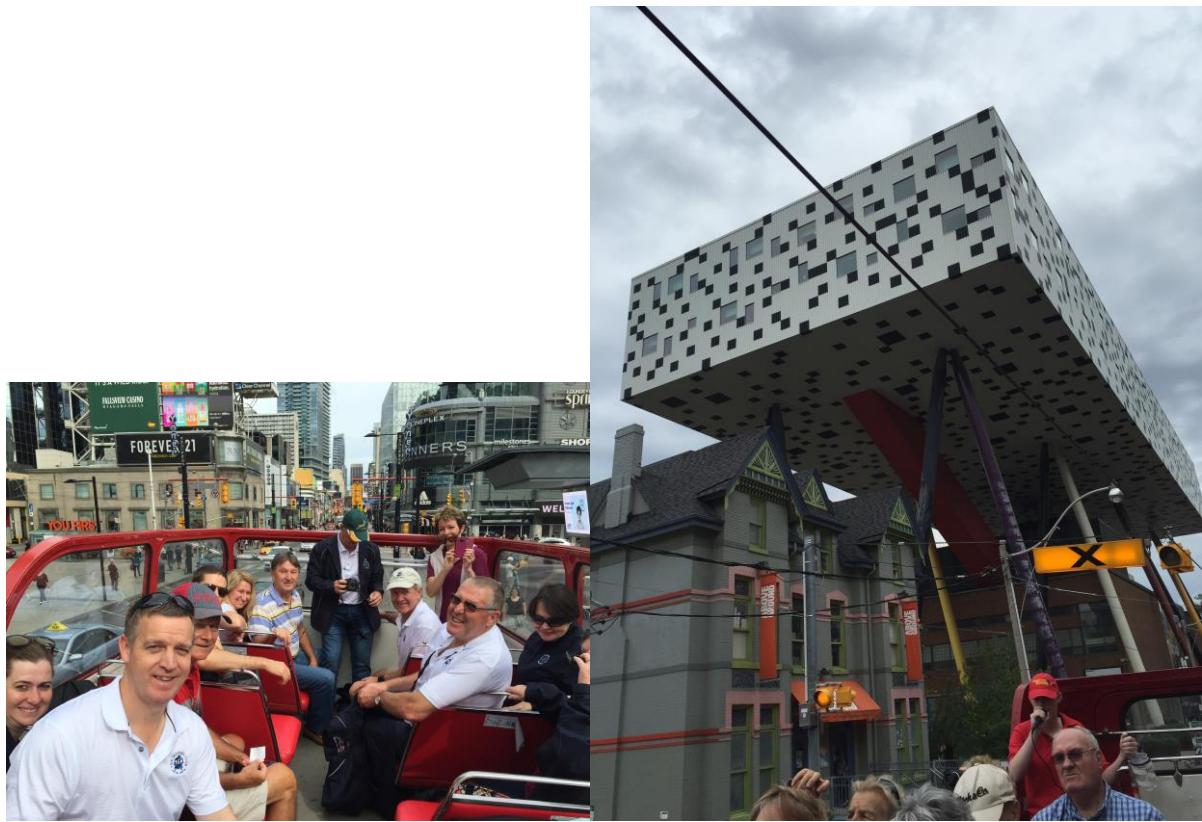
Off to our match at the Toronto Cricket Club, and a super close affair, generally, with the Canadian hosts being Jesterly in letting us sneak in 4-3, and then showing us how to properly play hardball doubles. I really enjoy this game. Tracey was a little lax in following the dress code, going for a rather off-white, black number for her skort. Off to dinner at Tim and Mary Bovard, and another royal treat. A host of Jesters there, including Lolly Gillen, the President of Squash Canada. Really interesting conversations about the direction of squash. Thanks so much for all the assistance, hosting and playing from amongst others, Tim Mallory, Leslie Freeman, Mike and Heather Hobart, Tim and Mary Bovard, Steve and Suzanne Seider, Chris Deratney and Tammie Sangster, John Harvey and Catherine Fournier, and Brian Murray and Shirley Fleming. And of course Bert Keene and Jim Bruce. We have been spectacularly looked after. In to bed at 12:30am, but asleep by 1:30am after clearing through mail and stuff, so the trend continues.....





DAY 8:

What a day. Started off with an open-top bus tour of Toronto. The eclectic architecture is fascinating. So many different styles. Really interesting. Then a quick palate cleanser at Fionn MacCools, and we were off to the Blue Jays baseball game, vs the Tampa Bay Rays. A really fun time out - despite the result - and including all the baseball classics, such as beer, a foot long hotdog, and the 7th innings singalong. What a great few hours. Then it was off to the observation deck of the CN Tower, some 350m up. Including a glass floor, which Broomy and Willie proceeded to do hand stands on. Oh my oath. But spectacular views across Toronto, and a real treat to be up there. Then off to dinner in the Distillery District, and super privileged to have Jonathan Power pop in to say hi, along with Matt Serediak, who had visited SA earlier this year. Jonathan spoke to us about his movie he has assisted with, documenting the progress of a Pakistani girl who progressed through squash despite having to hide from the Taliban. Quite a story. Jonathan helped her to get to Canada, where she still resides. The elk burger was fantastic, washed down with a Canadian classic, the Bloody Caesar. Clamato juice, as opposed to tomato juice. Another fantastic evening, so generously hosted by the Canadian Jesters, again.









DAY 9:

Niagara Falls day... After meeting at Toronto Cricket Club for our 8:30am departure, we eventually set off a few minutes late after waiting for the Bluck's to arrive. Each touring team has one..... A quick stop in Burlington / Oakville to pick up Cass Quinn, Dave von Wely and Norm Crook. And from this point forward the conversation headed south, quite rapidly, as Cass got in to his stride, targeting Big Willie. Breakfast en route courtesy of Brian standing in a Tim Horton's line for 45 minutes - many thanks, Brian! - and Tracey had thoughtfully come along stocked with some Bloody Caesar's, purely for research and comparative purposes, of course. First stop was Niagara Falls, and a trip on the Horn Blower, in to the mist of the Falls. Absolutely spectacular, and just a little wet..... The volume of water flowing over those falls is mind-blowing. Off the boat and straight in to the bus to head to Peller Wine Estate, for wine tasting, including tasting the uniquely Canadian Ice wine, and doing this in a tasting room set at -10 degrees, all snugly bundled up in fluffy jackets. Quite a unique experience, and for us warm weather South African's, a sneak peek of some 'mild' Canadian winter weather. From Peller we headed to Queenstown Heights restaurant, with spectacular views of the river below, and with really tasty fare... Try the salmon if you go there. Then it was back through Toronto, and another piece of Toronto culture, materially heavy traffic. Thankfully Pieter had thought ahead, and brought an array of craft beers to sample, just in case our fluid levels got dangerously low. Our thanks also to Jim Bruce for organizing and joining us on the tour, and for Tim Bovaird, Brian Murray, Bert Keene and Molson Robertson for joining us. A meet up with our hosts back at the Cricket Club, and then off to individual dinners with our hosts. A most spectacular way to end our time in Toronto, and a continuation of the most ridiculous hospitality one could imagine.

If you want to see some of the pictures of the trip, go to the following Facebook link:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/603042609875253/>

Join the group and you can see some of the spectacular events we have been so privileged to experience. Next stop - Calgary and a move in to the mountains.....

But not before I managed to leave two of my smart shirts at my hosts in Toronto. This would become a theme as we move through the tour. A huge thanks to Tim Mallory for posting it to me in Vancouver via Canada Post. The locals were quite sceptical that it would arrive, but arrive it did, and at the time promised. Reminds me of the halcyon days of the SA Post Office.....





DAY 10:

Travel day. After a most pleasant 4-hr flight from Toronto - with some inter-Jester competition on the Trivial Pursuit game on the in-flight entertainment system, and I won't mention who came out tops, cough, cough - , it was time to arrive in Calgary, to be met by Mike and Laura Letourneau, Bill Fisher and Jack Hoogstraten. But not before I appear to have left my reading glasses on the plane... So if the future tour reports make no sense, there is the reason. Whizzed off to Mike's house for a lovely BBQ of spicy sausage, ribs and chicken. Delicious. And then a few hours at leisure. Which was a welcome relief, after such a stunning, yet full-tilt itinerary so far. Some people went for a gentle cycle, whilst others just relaxed. Then a quick pick-up, casual game of squash at the amazing Glencoe Club, including a swim for some of the ladies. Tracey found a new admirer on the ice rink, although I think he was about 10 years old. Yet this did not appear to phase him. Full of confidence, he proceeded to roll out his best moves both on and off the ice, including his best pick-up routines. To no avail, though, as Tracey ruthlessly left him hanging. But I expect he will be luckier in love shortly. Off to dinner at Eric and Kim Watson's place for beautiful beef rolls and our first experience of a Nanaimo bar. Plus copious amounts of Prickly Pear shots. Copious. This little drink works a little like the famed Zulu pincer movement, where you have one, feel quite fine, and then a few moments later it has circled around behind you and unloaded both barrels at the back of your head. Or maybe that was because I didn't stop at one? A slightly more relaxed, travel day, which was fantastic.



DAY 11:

One thing is for sure on a tour such as this, if there is a day of rest and relaxation, then it is sure to be followed by the polar opposite the next day. And so it came to pass. "Let's go for a little hike", said Mike. Sure, we said. Now, at this point, I need to provide a little context. When the 2015 Canadian Jesters toured South Africa, the Cape Town Jesters had the inspired idea to traipse the Canadians up Lion's Head, as well as a few up Platteklip Gorge, and then got them on to the squash court. Inspired. Except for the fact that our mountains are mere pimples on the landscape that is the Canadian Rockies. Ya think that is a mountain, I can almost hear them say... As the saying goes, revenge is a dish best served cold. And this was true, especially at the top of Prairie Mountain. To put this in context, fellows and fellowettes, and for Tour de France devotees, probably similar to the Alp d'Hues, or Col du Tourmalet. And straight up. STRAIGHT. UP. 18 degrees at the bottom, after doing 700m of elevation straight up, to 2,200 meters, it was 2 degrees at the top. Shew. Hectic. Also, an interesting fact is that this area was used for the shooting of the movie Brokeback Mountain. Which was all good and well, until I heard Ryan say at the top that he was feeling cold and needed a hug. Awkward. But the mind is a funny thing, and here we sit 2 days later, thinking, hey, that was not too bad. Until I stand up and hobble like an old man. Then again, my wife thinks I am an old man, anyway. And Broomy went for a mountain bike, which by all reports was spectacular.

With very low expectations, and with a rejigged order (thanks to a short selection meeting consisting of me, myself and I), we played our match against the Calgary Jesters. Slightly concerning that the schedule said Test Match # 5, and that we had been sufficiently softened up on the Col du Prairie Mountain, we surprised all and sundry by sneaking out a 4-3 victory, but the result is irrelevant. Some more doubles and then off to Jim and Gail Clapperton's for a delicious dinner of burgers, chicken, sausages, and a most fantastic dessert of a blueberry pie and ice-cream. And the most efficient laundromat in town, who managed to repair my white fleece too that received a rather large dose of a self-inflicted red wine soaking. More prickly pear and before we knew it, all the ladies were up and doing Loslappie. A hot tub back at Mike and Laura's and we were back in the 'wee hours of the morning' bedtime. Our thanks also to our other hosts who billeted us, Bill and Carol Fisher, Jack and Sue Hoogstraten and Mike and Adine Whitfeild.



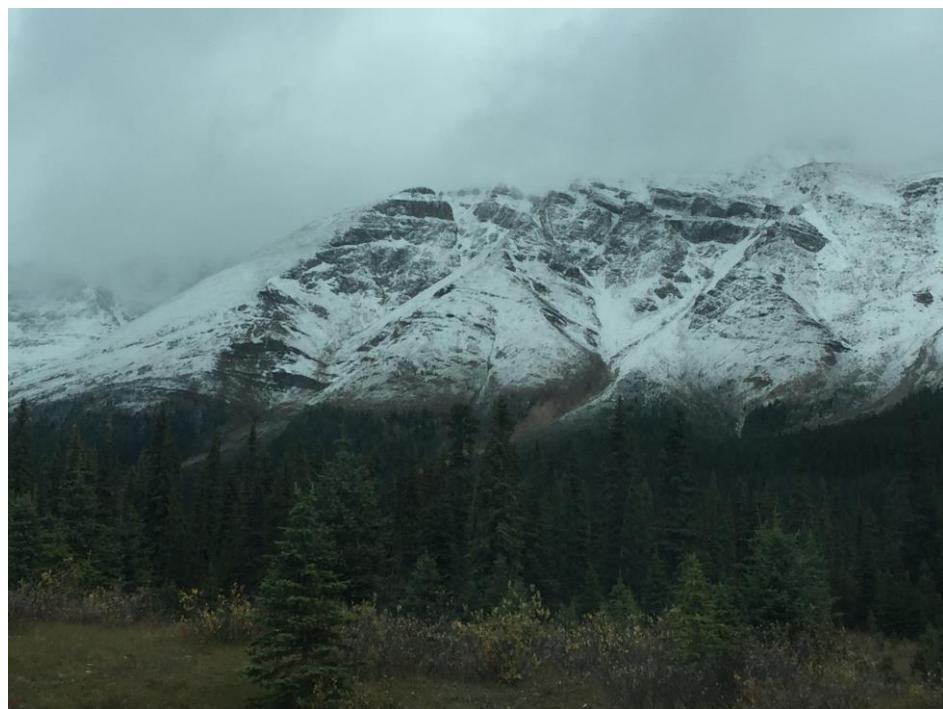
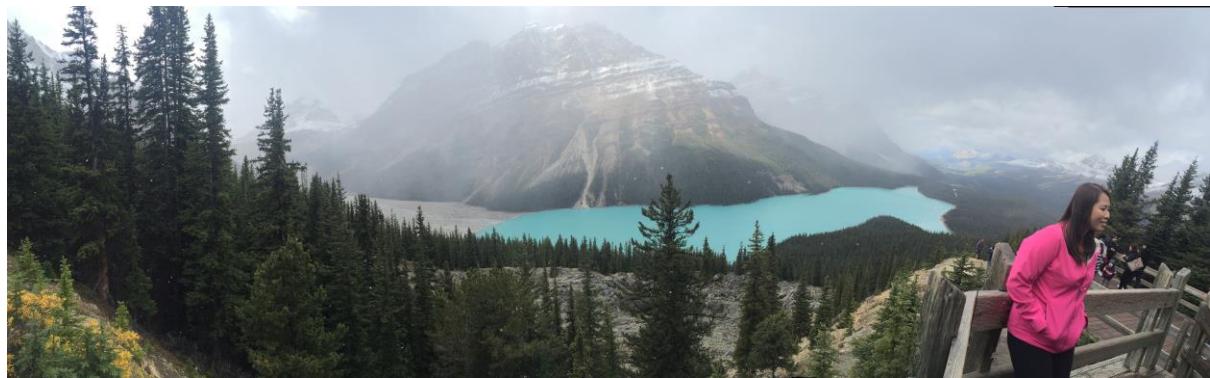






DAY 12:

Travel day again. This time, driving to Banff. A whole lot of feeling disorientated, as we got used to driving on the wrong side of the road, as well as the wrong side of the car. Maybe the prickly pear shots the night before had something to do with this? And a massive thanks to Mike Letourneau for driving along with us. In fact, he might be driving all the way to Vancouver with us. Crazy. To put this in context, this is akin to driving from Cape Town to Jo'burg, just to show people the way. Insane. But really appreciated, not just to make sure we get there, but also to show us little bits that we would just not have experienced without him. As we reached Banff, the group split in to 2, with half going to an extreme climb at Via Ferrata, and the other half of us going on a more leisurely, yet equally scenic, trip to Peyto Lake. From all accounts - and an attendee is welcome to report - the Via Ferrata option was part pure exhilaration, part pure fear. Sheer drops below you, whilst 'safely' tethered to a guide line. Awesome for all attendees, by all accounts. And a HUGE thanks to the Calgary Jesters for organizing. The other party had some amazing scenic viewing through Banff National Park, finishing up with the most spectacular views at Peyto Lake, with even some reasonable snowfall thrown in for good measure. The color of the lake was something to behold. Most of the touring party managed to spend a little time in the hot springs at Banff, which was a wonderful relaxing occasion, especially after the heavy legwork of the last two days.













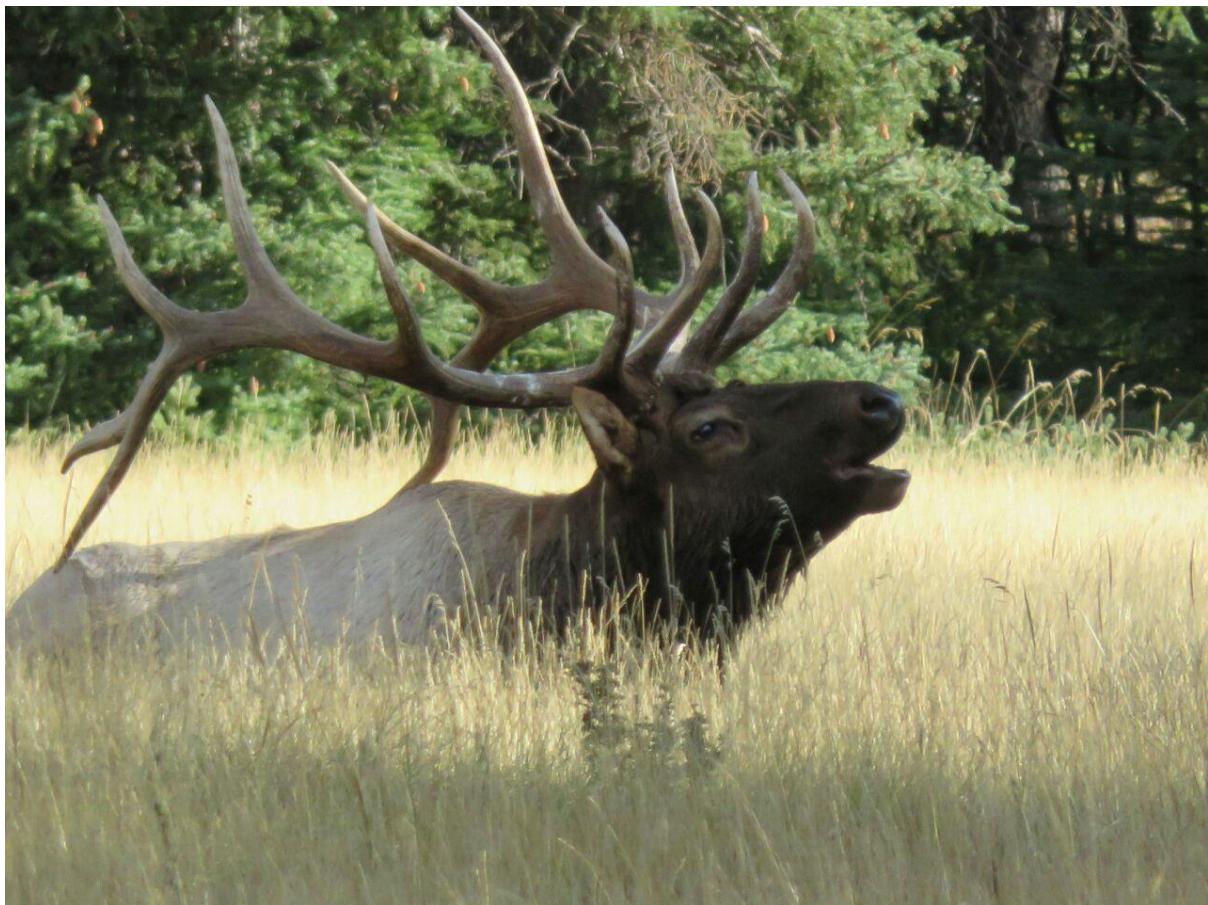
DAY 13:

Crazy to think we are in Day 13 of this crazy trip. Crazy awesome, of course. Today was a travel day, driving from Banff to Kelowna. We started off with a quick visit to the Banff Springs Hotel. An amazing hotel, with the most stupendous views. But I doubt you would want to spend much time in the shopping atrium. I've generally found that items that carry no price tag, are not for you, if you have to ask their price! Then Mike took us for a quick drive through the Banff Springs golf course. Cath spotted a black bear running across the bank on the far side of the river, and we had some brilliant sightings of elk, quite a few females and a serious male, with serious antlers to match. This did result in us being a little late to pick up Tracey, who had elected to wander around Banff instead. Instead of a 10-year old this time, she appears to have been propositioned by a crow in the car park of the local supermarket this time. A quick stop at Lake Louise, amongst the most madding of crowds, and we were all set to start our trip, until we lost Willie, Verity, Ryan and Ilka. Nothing that a gentle hour can't fix, waiting patiently at the idyllic surrounds of an on ramp to the Trans Canadian Highway - not nearly as exciting as it sounds - and we finally headed off to Kelowna. Lunch at the most quirky Truffle Pig in Field, and then the road trip to Kelowna, through some decent rain. We've really seen all bits, from the heat of Halifax to the snow, rain and cold of the Rockies. But we find ourselves safely ensconced in Kelowna, now 9 hours behind SA time, ready to inflict ourselves on Vancouver tomorrow. But not before a trip to a local Irish pub for dinner, to find ourselves amongst a birthday karaoke party. Lou was about to entertain everyone with a wee ditty, but unfortunately her request had already been chosen. The entertainment therefore moved to Tracey, who continued to be this homing beacon for all and sundry. This time a stray lady who had tried her best moves on the guys in the bar - strangely to no avail - and then Tracey made that schoolgirl error of making eye contact, fleetingly, and the rest, well, is history. Suffice it to say, we departed said Flannagan's bar rather quickly, with Tracey leaving another broken heart behind.













DAY 14:

We arrived at Kelowna in the dark, so it was great to have a little time to see it during daylight. A most pretty harbour and downtown area, and where the homeless people living in the gardens are quite upmarket, as one was quite gently lying in the gardens reading his iPad.... Question: where does he charge it? Then it was time to drive through to Vancouver. First stop was at the simply beautiful setting of Mission Hills Wine Estate, for a quick stop and a quick look around. From there, we drove through to meet Paul Stevenson, David Adams and Rashid Aziz at Othello Tunnels, some 2 hours east of Vancouver. After a lovely picnic lunch, it was time to explore the tunnels. These tunnels were built for the railroads, and were a means to work the railroad through the hills and winding river. Quite an engineering feat, and really nice environment to wander around in, especially trying to figure out how these towering trees manage to stay secured on virtually bare rock face. Then it was time to face the famous, or infamous, Vancouver traffic, which was surprisingly light. We managed to drop off the hire cars, but not before Via Canada tried to fleece us to the tune of CAN\$75 per vehicle, as we had parked in the incorrect parking bay. Once all this was sorted out, it was off to our billets for the first of 4 nights in Vancouver.







DAY 15:

A visit to the Capilano Suspension Bridge, which was spectacular not just for the engineering feat of actually building the bridge, but also for the new record of the Bluck's by being 60 minutes late for our meeting time. We really should have had a stronger drinks fines protocol in place..... In their defence, they were on the south side of Vancouver, and therefore had a bit of a trip, but was it also because they were staying with John Hungerford? What was also spectacular was the trees that were in the surrounding gardens, the tallest being a Douglas Fir some 600 years old and 250 feet tall. The suspension bridge itself was 117m long and at its low point you were at the same height as the top of the Statue of Liberty. So - quite a morning for those of us who aren't too crazy about heights, but good to conquer these fears, even in just some small way. After Capilano, we went straight to a most delicious lunch at Canyon Restaurant close to Capilano, with menu's especially made out for us with the Jesters logo on it. Detail, again, and much acknowledged and appreciated. The regular liquid lunch ensued, with us following the maxim of a bird can't fly on one wing, so everything had to be in even numbers. From there we went to Evergreen Squash Club for some casual and creative (I.e. High wall) squash. And then it was off to the formal dinner at the Capilano Golf Club, with all of us actually scrubbing up quite decently. The setting was amazing, looking out over Vancouver. Everyone in jacket and tie, or evening dress, and looking quite dapper, even in the rather distinctive blue and orange blazer of WPCC.... After some brief introductions from Paul and Duncan, it was left to Terry Owen to present the plaque on behalf of the SA Jesters, which he did excellently, although perhaps breaking doctor-patient confidentiality, and then we were royally entertained by Mike Jackson singing us a few songs, one about the Canadian BC Jesters, and then the infamous Dog Song. Very amusing. Absolutely spoiled with the most incredible spread of food, and that brought to an end a really full day in Vancouver.









DAY 16:

First up was a drive to Squamish, stopping at Furry Creek, Shannon Falls and Chief. The great news is we didn't lose Willy along the way. The drive there was absolutely gorgeous, with the most incredible views. Vancouver truly is a very pretty city. The walk at Furry Creek was beautiful, in gloriously sunny weather, and on a great little walkway around the waters edge. The only thing missing was a whale popping up, but not to be. Next stop was Shannon Falls, which is a very impressive waterfall. What was equally impressive was Chief very near by, which is a sheer rock face, and world famous as a Mecca for climbers. The rock face is so enormous, and so sheer, that you actually think no-one is on it, and then suddenly you start seeing these climbers - that literally look like tiny ants on the rock face - and once you have picked one, you start to see more and more. Crazy people. From there it was a short drive to lunch at a picture perfect setting in Squamish, right next to a beautiful river, with salmon jumping and seals pottering around in the water. It was so picturesque that jugs of Sangria were ordered, which seemed most appropriate. After lunch off we headed to Grouse Mountain. Andrew, Carol, Pieter, Ryan, Terry and Tracey were the intrepid souls who tackled the Grouse Grind, whilst the rest of us took the leisurely 4 minute gondola up. Broomy popped up at the top of the Grind in roughly 55 minutes, basically saying he had taken it relatively easy, and with hardly a drop of sweat on him. Legend. There must be something in this mountain biking thing. The rest followed shortly thereafter, in differing degrees of humour and sweat. The two grizzly bears at the top put on a bit of a show for us, and the lumberjack demonstration was most amusing. Down Grouse Mountain and off to smaller, separate dinner parties this evening, in anticipation of, rather sadly, our final full day tomorrow on this ridiculously awesome tour.



DAY 17:

Our final full day of this 2016 SA Jesters outbound tour to Canada. And for the first time in 17 days, a day of rain greeted us. This scuppered the planned cycle ride through Stanley Park, which would have been awesome, but we ended up going to watch a movie called Fly Over Canada. What a fabulous movie - think IMAX meets virtual reality. You are strapped in to seats and then you are immersed in this birds-eye view of Canada, as you fly over the country from east to west - much like we had just done. Together with mist sprays, and wind and smell experiences as you flew over different parts of the country. Quite spectacular - almost as spectacular as Deidre Smith-Baker's maneuver to outthink a fellow battling parker in the Canada Place parking lot. If truth be told, she needed to interject as Doug Macdougall was not making much headway. After Fly Over Canada it was time to make a hasty retreat to Jericho, for our final squash match of the tour. I've always been told that the squash is secondary on these tours, but perhaps news had reached Vancouver that we had been all-conquering on our travels. This resulted in a very strong line-up being trotted out to face us in our final fixture. And what a fixture it was. Ebb and flow, ying and yang. Tracey got us off to her customary strong start - finishing undefeated throughout the tour. Legendary, ma'am, legendary. Up against it as Ryan came up against a strong opponent. But no worry, Big Willie brought us back to a 2-1 lead. Broomy finally succumbed in 5 high-quality games, to the recently crowned US 45 years and up champion, so a high quality opponent. 2-2.... Piet unfortunately went down, but your humble scribe managed to pull it back to 3-3, so it all came down to the final match, with Terry on court. Before we knew it, it was 2-2 in games, with Terry deploying the dual strategy of Luftwaffe-like aerial attacks with high lobs, and then deft, surgeon-like touch with his drops. Deep in to the 5th, but unfortunately Terry went down in 5, and so it happened that our flag was finally lowered, albeit in the most Jesterly fashion.

And so on to our final function, at the most impressive residence of Russell and Gillian Smith, but not before Ryan and I had dashed off to pick up a hire car, which will make more sense later. A really fantastic turnout, ably supported by the Vancouver Jesters. Kind final words from Paul Stevenson, and a final bit of Jesterly entertainment from Lou Duys, and it was time to say our farewells, at which stage I started questioning where my passport was..... to recall that I believe I left it in the hire car.... A few frantic phone calls later and said passport was found. My wife continues to shake her head at me. A huge thank you to our hosts in Vancouver, Paul and Jackie Stevenson, Russell and Gillian Smith, Doug and Jan MacDougall, John and Debbie Hungerford, Deirdre Smith-Baker and Steve Baker, and Toni and Bruni Goodson.



DAY 18:

And so, as Ol' Frankie said:

"And now, the end is near
And so I face, the final curtain
My friend, I'll say it clear
I'll state my case, of which I'm certain I've lived a life that's full I travelled each and every highway
And more, much more than this, I did it my way"

And that neatly sums up this amazing SA Jesters tour to Canada in 2016. Our most huge thanks to every Canadian who went out of their way to make us feel welcome, and contributed in any small way. Your contribution, good humour, and fantastic hospitality was amazing.

And to my fellow tourists - thanks for being such an easy, affable, game-for-anything bunch, that provided the perfect environment for us to maximize this experience. To Andrew, Ryan, Terry, Tracey, Piet and Big Willie, thanks for being the embodiment of everything that Jester's stands for, and for Cathy, Ilka, Carol, Lou and Verity, thanks for putting up with us.

But not before I left shoes and a shirt at Jericho Club. Oh well.....

Over and out, team.....

