

## CANADA

SIGGY AND HEATHER | TRIP TO SOUTH WEST COAST - CANADA | 1ST SEPTEMBER 2016

## Downtown

Dreary weather greeted us when we threw open our blinds this morning. Nothing was going to deter us from hopping on our bikes for a ride through Vancouver's city commercial centre and on to its most famous attraction - Stanley Park. Being so early in the morning the shopping streets were eerily empty of cars and people. Evidently 67% of downtown Vancouver is made up of residential apartments. We rode on and the rain held off. After 15 mins pedalling we finally entered the park with its more than 27kms of dedicated bike and pedestrian trails that follow the rocky coastline and meander through the picturesque bush teaming with wildlife. We did catch a glimpse of squirrels but in our haste to get cracking we took the wrong option to the left rather than going on the right fork of the bike track. We were some way down the track when we realised we were going in the wrong direction against one way traffic. Canadians are described as nice people. We heard very little swearing from the fast traveling bike riders zooming towards us. We rode as far as we dared and decided it was better to turn around and simply go with the flow.



*We have completed quite a few house swaps over the years. The best aspect of house swapping is meeting the people behind the emails. Today we met Kathy and David from Victoria, Vancouver Island. They are hosting us for a few days and providing a house swap later in our trip. Over a meal and almost 4 hours of non stop conversation they announced that we had passed the "test". Their kids told them that if we looked at all "shifty" then not to give us the code to get into their Canmore house. Comforting to know that we, and they, looked and sounded genuinely nice.*



continued on next page



## Our journey begins in earnest.

The coastal bike track is certainly worth the effort. The rocky shoreline, the anchored cargo vessels and the distant island vista made for a great start to our day. We always feel great when we get a ride in! Until of course when we finally hit two way bike traffic and realised too late we were traveling on the wrong side of the road. Again gentle reminders came our way - dopey Australian's!!

Back to our cosy hotel, some breakfast and a quick pack we jumped into a taxi to pick up our hire car. When we got there we went to the reception desk. It looked really dirty. A dishevelled man with oil stains came in and asked us in an abrupt voice - "you need something?" Not a good first impression was as first thought. Hertz? We asked? No. They're next door. Phew!! He had us worried.

It took us no time at all to load our bags in the car and get our GPS phone app to work. Then, with wipers on instead of blinkers, we hit the road to the ferry terminal.

It is always a little bit stressful when you first start to drive on the wrong side of the road but you soon get the hang of it. We have traveled around Europe for almost 16 months

now over the last 7 years. The first day is the worst, but the next morning can be as problematic. Just when you think you have mastered the situation your mind kicks in and it takes a split second or two to react - you look the wrong way or automatically enter a road on the left instead of the right. Having a sympathetic but firm co-pilot helps no end!

Mission almost accomplished when we parked ready to board the ferry to take us across to Vancouver Island. It is amazing how many cars were lined up and how many cars a ferry can take. 1.5 hours later we crossed the strait and were on the road to Victoria, the main town on the island. The traffic was extraordinarily heavy. We checked out the houses we passed and also the road and shop signs. Very much like Brisbane.

We are now ensconced in our house swap house for the next 2 days. Evidently, according to the Lonely Planet this island's scenery rates up there with the most scenic. We are looking forward to enjoying our stay before we move up the coast.







# PHOTOS

