

Season 2 – Part 1. Atlantic Canada.



Tu 25.8.2015, day 44. Flight to Canada!!

Got up relatively early and a bit apprehensive as we had quite a busy day ahead. But in the end everything went as smooth as silk. The bikes were already packed up, so we had breakfast, packed the tent and the rest of our stuff and waited for the bus. Again no problem to fit everything into the bus. Got chatting to a half English half German guy who sprained his ankle while hiking. He was quite full of himself telling us about all the wild stories and adventures he had already gone through. I'm really looking forward to Canada, where I hope there will be fewer tourists. In the end, we didn't really get talking to anybody from Iceland. This, I think is very typical for a country that is completely centered on tourism.

We then went and checked in all our bags. We were a bit unlucky, as there was a seemingly never ending stream of flight attendants and pilots who were checking in at the same time. It was also

interesting to see the amounts of flights going to North America. It seems Reykjavik is quite a hub for flights between Europa and North America.

In spite of all our worries, checking in all our luggage was a piece of cake. The young guy at the counter even charged us far less than he should have and we only paid for 2 pieces of medium size luggage. 60EUR instead of 210EUR that we should have paid.











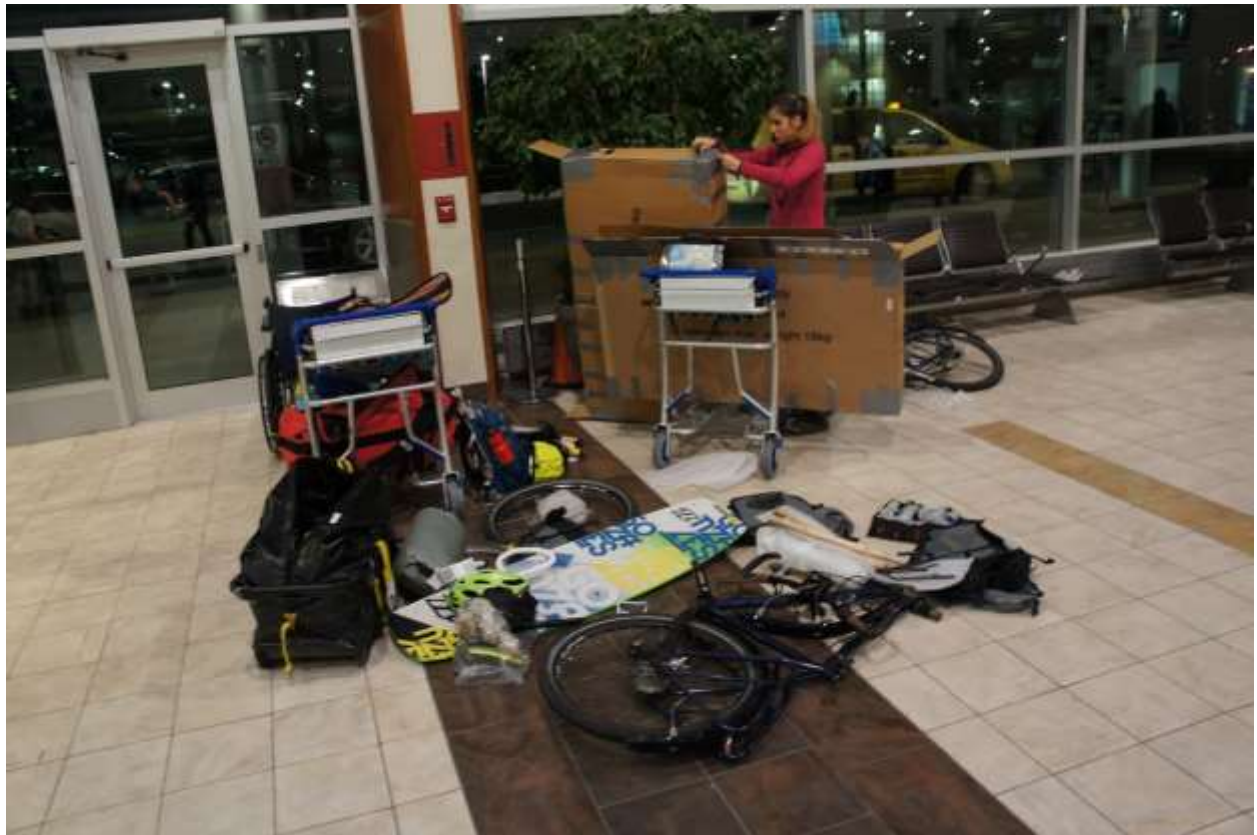






To celebrate our good luck at check-in, we dug into some nice mini-burgers and beer on the plane. After a short 3.5h flight and 2 movies we touched down in Halifax. Our bikes had to go through customs to check for dirt and disease on the tires. Everyone was extremely friendly and helpful.

It took us well over 1 h to reassemble our bikes, but everything seemed to fit as it was supposed to and also there was no transport damage. And so we biked the first 5km in North America to the Holiday Inn Hotel where we had some instant noodles and cookies in bed watching TV. Siria fell asleep (or should I say passed out?) immediately after the noodles. Was quite funny to watch actually, I have never seen anyone falling asleep that quickly!





We 26.8.2015, day 45. First day in Halifax and stay at Jenna's place

I was really quite excited about how biking in Canada would be. We had worked out on Google Maps where there was, or at least seemed to be, a road from the airport down into Halifax that was not a high way. So off we went with all our baggage. The paved road soon turned into a gravel road and then into a dirt road, completely overgrown and with deep water puddles. We very slowly bounced along while the bugs attacked us. This was even worse than Iceland! However the road very soon got better and we had a very nice 50km ride along lakes and rivers into Halifax. Getting over the river that separates Halifax from Dartmouth turned out to be quite a challenge. The bridge was being renovated and the bike lane was closed. The shuttle service looked as if it would not take our baggage and the trailer, so we headed off towards the other bridge. However a lady informed us that that bridge was a highway and bikes were not permitted. So back we went, tried again to get on the shuttle bus, but sure enough, they were much less than willing to load all our bags and trailer. Luckily there was also a ferry, this turned out to be by far the best way to get across. We had a bit of an amble round Halifax and then went back to Dartmouth arriving at Jenna and Dale's place on the dot at 19:00, in good Swiss fashion. This was our first Warm Showers night and it turned out to be a really nice experience. Jenna and Dale put us up, we had a couple of drinks in their bar, Siria went to pick all sorts of goodies from the garden (blueberries, cucumbers, beans, ...) and we ended up having a very nice improvised meal and long chats. Our hosts were real bike aficionados and I particularly likes all the art made out of bike parts that was spread out all over the house.











Th 27.8.2015, day 46. Second day in Halifax and stay in Prince George Hotel.

The day didn't start off well. We got up, showered, toasted some bagels, made coffee and went into the garage to pack our bikes. Then, click, the door closed behind us and we found ourselves locked out of the house and there was no way to lock the garage from the outside. So we ended up having to crawl out the window and close it behind us as well as we could. Then after some real American style nosh at Boston pizza we went to check in at the Prince George Hotel. We had received a voucher for one night at this posh place from our friends back home and we were really looking forward to this pampering and we were looking forward to see how the bell boys would deal with the unusual situation of having bike tourists. The three young smartly dressed lads were a bit helpless to start off, started piling our backs onto the baggage trolley and gingerly rolled our bikes into the hallway. It cost us 10\$ in tips, but it was well worth it for the laugh. We then had strawberries, runny cream and a bottle of bubbly in the bath. Very nice indeed!

By chance I saw that McGinty, a local folk band that I like very much, were playing in the pub down the road. What a stroke of luck! It turned out a really fun evening talking to a girl from Newfoundland who was engineer on a yacht and who had some quite interesting stories about this industry. I never thought that even a smallish motor yacht would require over 10 full time employees to run and a big one up to 50! We also got talking to an American couple who were celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary. Apparently they had their first date at a McGinty concert somewhere in the USA and specially flew to Halifax just for the weekend to see them again.

After the concert, that was great, even if the fiddler was in hospital with appendicitis and after a couple of beers we did what should always be done at the end of such a night: we went for kebabs. And even here at the Kebab joint we had a nice encounter with a guy who was a retired (or burnt out?) teacher who now was working night shifts to be able to pay tuition fees for his daughter. And what a nice man he was...







Fr 28.8.2015, day 47. Rail Trail and night in Chris' garden.

It took us quite a while to get going after the long night in the Prince George. First stop was to bike over to a second hand guitar shop I found on google. The selection of guitars was quite thin, I had a look at some classic guitars, then also some steel string baby guitars, one of them a Taylor, that was not bad at all. Then the guy handed me a little Ebase guitar. Never heard the name before, but it was excellent, even with pickups that sounded not bad at all. He also rigged me up with a pink Daisy Rock gig bag, new strings and a belt. I was absolutely thrilled!! Another guitar for my collection and only 200 bucks!

We also managed to find a very nice food box and stocked up at the supermarket. We also found out that there seemed to be a disused rail tracks all over the place that had been converted into a bicycle paths. The one out of Halifax went through some salt marshes and this is the route we took. It was absolutely wonderful landscape. Unfortunately we headed off far too late and soon found ourselves biking in the dark without a plan of where to sleep. We arrived at the beach at Morristown, however a "no camping" sign was up. There was a sign for a campsite 3.5 miles away, so we headed in that direction. After close to 3.5 miles we reached a spot by a lake with 2 or 3 tents up, but no sign or anything saying it was a camp site. But it somehow looked public with pick-nick table, thrash box and fire place, so we pitched our tent and that was it.















Sa 29.8.2015, day 48. Bike to Murphy's cove

We slowly slowly got up and packed our stuff. I went for a nice swim and we made some Müsli for breakers. Right then a guy came over and asked us if we knew who owned this place. In an instant it became clear to me that this place definitively was not a public pick-nick and camping place. As a matter of fact this was already more or less clear to me the night before. Anyway, once again we were very positively surprised by the openness of the people here. The guy turned out to be Chris and had moved to Nova Scotia one year ago from Montreal and worked as a carpenter building Marriot Hotels all over the world. We got talking and he even went back over to his house and brought us coffee! He was a wonderful guy!

We then biked to Murphy's cove along the rocky coast. Biking was quite tough as the road is a constant up and down. We got to the Murphy's Camping, which was quite busy and also very nicely groomed. However we made a terrible mistake with the choice of camp spot. We chose number 48 specifically because it was tucked away right at the back where we (or at least I) thought it would be nice and quiet. On the spot next to us there were two young couples and a 2 year old baby. They had their car parked on our spot and didn't even ask us if this was OK. This should have warned me. Anyway, they ended up drinking shouting, cursing, insulting each other, quarreling and in the end crying up to about 4am. I hardly slept a wink all night.









Su 30.8.2015, day 49. A wonderful day in Spry Head.

We set off from Murphy Cove up the coast. Quite soon we got to Spry Bay and Taylor Head. We decided to stop off there maybe for lunch break, maybe even to stay and enjoy a day at the beach. It turned out to be an absolutely beautiful spot. A calm beach with almost no one there. There was a very nice Ketch moored in the bay, which reminded me again of the next adventure: one day I want to have one of those and sail all over the place!

I took a short 3.5 km trail round the park. Siria was too hungry for a 2h hike (2h for 3.5 km??) so she went straight back. This happened to be fortunate, as she got talking to Harald, the park warden who invited us to camp in the park.

So this is exactly what we did. Just before sunset we got to the house he mentioned and pitched our tent while the sun was setting. Harald dropped by to see how we were doing and he even invited us round to his home for breakfast the next morning. And not only that, he even went home to bring us some beers!















Mo 31.8.2015, day 50. Spry Head to Sherbrooke

The tent was drenched by the dew in the morning. We packed up and headed off to Sheet Harbour. It took us a while to find Harald's house (or actually we found it immediately, but didn't dare go round the back to look for him). As promised, he had a breakfast of bacon and eggs on for us. And toasted bagels and yoghurt and two apples. His favorite expression was "Ah well, what can you do!". He was an absolutely wonderful and generous guy. As Swiss, we are really not accustomed to such generosity and hospitality.

Later that day in East Quoddy we completed the mark of 2000km on the bike. Not bad!

We got to Sherbrooke at about 6pm. I was expecting a Tim Horton's bars, restaurants, etc. But Sherbrooke was completely deserted. It turned out that the main attraction is a historical museum village. It closes at 5pm and then the whole of Sherbrooke closes down. We went to the camping, that was very nicely located, right beside the river just in time to enjoy a nice sunset while swinging in the hammock. Highlight was meeting a very nice Quebec couple, who were stranded due to a petrol outage in all gas stations. We got chatting and now we have a place to stay just close to Quebec!







Tu 1.9.2015, day 51. A windy day in Sherbrooke

The forecast for today was a strong wind exactly from the wrong direction, so we decided to stay in Sherbrooke. We went to Beanie's which turned out to be the best place in town. There we got talking to Rhonda, who was working there. She gave us her number and invited us round to sit by the fire in the evening. The day passed very quickly, the Quebec couple were gone at 5pm, so obviously gas was delivered. We cooked hamburgers for dinner. I wonder how many have tried doing this with a camping stove! They were wonderful and in the end we knocked back 800g of meat. At 7pm as arranged we went round to Rhonda's house. Being Swiss we arrived at 19:00 on the dot. She had some wonderful strawberries prepared for us and it turned out to be quite an emotional evening. She poured out here life's story and all the losses she had to bear. The thought I came away with was basically, capture the moment, make the best out of every situation, enjoy life to the full. And right now, that is exactly what we are doing. No matter what comes after this trip, for sure I will not regret anything!

We 2.9.2015 day 52. A night on an abandoned highway in Antigonish

As we seem to be spending a lot of time discussing where we should stop for lunch, where we should spend the night, what we should cook, etc... we decided to take turns in making these decisions. Today would be my day. Siria went off to the shop for some bread, unfortunately it only opened at 9am, but she brought me a coffee which was wonderful! So we had some stir fried egg and crackers. We set off from the camping, bought something for lunch at the store and headed for Antigonish. The ride was really nice with tail wind and most of the trip was on small side lanes along rivers or lakes. Small little clouds darkened the mood when a nice little spot on the lake for lunch was vetoed ("but it's right in view of the house!"). We got to Antigonish, I went to the bike store to buy some bike trousers. The guy in the shop was very interested in our bikes and had a good look at our set-up. He also gave me a tip on where to spend the night. Apparently there was an abandoned section of the highway on a hill up from the mall. For me this sounded wonderful and I already had visions of us cooking a nice dinner right on the middle of the highway with the sun slowly setting. Siria was very uncomfortable with this and so, instead of sunset and cooking, there was arguments and discussions. Apparently my suggestion to try and cook the lentil-pea-oat soup mix by boiling it up, leave it soak for an hour or so and then warming it up again to save gas, instead of cooking on low flame for 90 min as in the instructions, was also cause for upset. So the tent was pitched in a very grumpy mood and the clouds of hungry mosquitos that descended on us didn't help.

In this respect Siria and I are really very different: "let's just try and see if it works" versus "it's not written that way so it will not work", "let's just try and do 100km, we can do it" versus "we will NEVER make it!", "let's just pitch our tent on this nice beach. I'm sure no one will mind, even if there's a no camping sign" versus "it's forbidden to camp here, there's a sign saying so", "the weather mightn't be so bad" versus "it's going to rain all day and the wind is against us", "it's another 20 km and it will take us 3 h because there will be a hill and bad roads" versus "cool, only 20 km, we're almost there". Yes, I am definitively over-optimistic. This is probably why I am always late as I think I will make it even if it is not really possible, but honestly, I prefer it this way. And even if Siria is a bit on the cautious and pessimistic side, maybe this is a good check for me and keeps me out of trouble...





Th 3.9.2015 day 53. Towards Cape George.

It was quite a special experience having breakfast on an abandoned high way. Somehow –even though you know it is not possible- you are always expecting a big truck to come up over the hill and wallop you. Breakfast by the way was particularly good with loads of blueberries, kiwi, apple, banana and nuts but was taken in a rather glum mood after yesterday's discussions. But life goes on, so we packed up rolled down the hill on the 4-lane highway and settled down in Small and Tall Café for coffee and internet.

We biked 42 km into a fresh breeze towards Cape George when we came to a small sea food joint in Balantyne Cove. A guy on his lawnmower waved me over and offered to let us camp on his freshly mowed lawn down by a small little brook. It was an absolutely wonderful spot and one more example of the openness and generosity of the Nova Scotia people. We ended up at their place for a chat and a nice glass of Pinot Gris.





Fr 4.9.2015 day 54. Bike and Kite to perfection!!

We got up quite early, had breakfast on the beach and took a shower in the marina. Then headed off up the hill towards the light-house. This also was very nice indeed and would also have been a very nice spot to spend the night. We continued round the peninsula, stopped for lunch at the lighthouse in Arisaig. This also was beautiful, with warm sunshine and shelter from the wind. We skipped the Arisaig Park, which I was afterwards sorry about as the main attraction there are 450 ma old fossils. Probably Trilobites. I love Trilobites!

Towards the evening we arrived in Lower Barney's River, went for a coffee in the service station shop and there we got talking to a lady who had just returned from P.E.I. She told us about the ferry to Isles de la Madeleine. Apparently this is a kite surf paradise. Should we go?

This day took a wonderful ending as I finally summoned enough courage to go kite surfing. The lagoon behind the camp site was absolutely perfect, unfortunately there was not quite enough wind, but still I managed to get up on the board a couple of times with the sun setting behind me. Absolutely wonderful! We finished off the day with the already mentioned pea-lentil-oat soup mix. It was delicious!













Sa 5.9.2015 day 55. First break-down, but Fred saves the day.

We were aiming to get to New Glasgow and on to Caribou where the ferry for P.E.I. leaves. We hadn't gone far when I heard the sharp crack of a broken spoke. I first tried to put in a new one, but I didn't dare bend it to thread it through the other spokes. So finally we put in the emergency spoke and headed off hoping to arrive in New Glasgow before the bike shops close. I thought this was typical that something like this should happen exactly on Saturday afternoon before a long bank holiday week-end.

Again we hadn't gone very far, when a guy mowing his lawn waves us over. We are already starting to overcome our Swissness and are accepting all invitations for a chat or whatever. However this time we were really trying to get to New Glasgow to get my wheel straightened out and I tried to explain this. But still we ended up having first a beer, then some cucumbers and long chats with Fred and his girlfriend Karen and a very elderly neighbor. He sent Siria and off to pick some veggies, so we ended up with 6 huge cucumbers, beans, Swiss chard and some tomatoes. Finally he called up the bike shop to make sure it was still open, loaded our bikes on the back of his truck and drove us straight over with 30 min left before closing. Fred really saved us, what a great guy!

The friendly mechanic in the bike shop fixed my wheel and we set off again arriving at Munroe's Island State Park Camping just before the sun set. And there was still plenty of space in the camping, in spite of Siria's "No chance to get a space, there all booked out! And it's a long week-end. We'll find nowhere!".

Siria started chatting to a Quebecois couple with a T3 Westphalia. And now we have a potential place to stay in Montreal! Also they spoke very highly of the Isles de la Madeleine. We are definitively off over there if anyway possible...







