



July School Holidays 2017

CANADA, ALASKA & SAN FRANCISCO

Mike Jaggs

Auckland, Friday 7th July 2017

Last day at work for 2 weeks. Only been in the job since 6th March and already I am on holiday. Thanks to 2 work trips missing both the Easter break and Queens Birthday, I'm able to use 6 days in Lieu plus just the 4 holiday days I may have earned.

Crazy week, both work and weather wise. Looking forward to the Canadian summer in Vancouver. First though, the flight.

Left a little early which was good as the traffic was crazy. Then lucky to find a seat in the Koru Lounge. It was packed tighter than I had ever seen it before, then on to an equally packed plane.

Lucky me again as I was really tired so managed some sleep. Actually fell asleep watching a movie. Just as well as when I woke, had to then endure some crying and sick kids on my side of the plane. Overall though, I think I got about 4 hours of nod time on the 12.5 hr flight. Not bad for me in economy class.

Lucky me (again) as got more sleep than Leanne. Izzy nodded off fairly well, Brayden the last to go to sleep though. He was quite happy with TV (Inc. South Park Grrrr...) and movies and towards the end, some games. Overall a good flight. Thanks again Air NZ for the great service.

Vancouver, Friday 7th July 2017

Vancouver International Airport was a smooth entry with their new paperless process. With the Searle clan now with us, we packed ourselves into 2 taxis to head into our hotel. The Airport is a fair way from the city centre and once again we travelled an almost familiar route noting a lot of new construction along the way.

Big greeting with Stuart and Vivien, our neighbor/grand parent/strangers who we hadn't seen for 4 months. Kids were very happy, as was Leanne to see them once again. They were missed as they finished the final 4 months of their around the world cruise.

We all settled into our rooms quickly. We all have 2 bedroom apartment's. plus another joined studio for Ant's clan so there was another bedroom for Adam. Ant a little jealous that our room was at the back of the building so a little quieter and we got a King bed vs Queen. A bit of the luck of the draw really as we really had no idea how the rooms would work out until we got there. Quite a good set up for us

though at the Times Square Suites, near Stanley Park. After a rest, we walked down to the waterfront and off to an early dinner at the White Spot.

Vancouver, Saturday, 8th July 2017

A late start due to poor sleep all round, but finally all on the bus to the Capilano Suspension Bridge park. Quite a different sight in the daytime and summer, from our last visit Dec 2016 in the twilight and dark, in full on snowy winter.

Vancouver has had a wet spring, so the growth was very lush. Kids really enjoyed the tree tops adventure, suspended bridges between the trees. Also this time we did the Cliff Walk which overlooks the river. A long, hot and energetic day.

Mummy went shopping late afternoon whilst I rested with the kids. Izzy proudly announced she had a wiggly tooth. Then minutes later she started mourning such loss. So tears as we had a bath and hair wash. Took nearly an hour to settle down. On the positive side, Izzy had cuddles with daddy watching Disney Princess and Puppy videos whilst she came to terms with her first wiggly tooth. By the time mummy got home, back to the excitement of having her first wiggly tooth.

Another early dinner, with just Grandma & Pappa as the Searle clan stayed out for dinner after shopping. So an early night for us, we thought. Kids didn't want to settle down. By 10pm mummy had enough and conked out. Daddy finally separated the kids at 11pm with Brayden then enjoying a good night on the couch.

Victoria, Vancouver Island, Sunday, 9th July 2017

An early start today with a 7:30am pick up for our tour to Victoria on Vancouver Island. Lucky for us the pick ups went fast and we arrived in time to get an earlier ferry. So we landed in Victoria an hour ahead of plan. Ferry ride quite pleasant allowing me time to start my blog, plus get to see the great views around the sound and islands. Its sunny and a little windy, but a nice smooth trip. Internet sucks though.

After landing @ xxx Bay, we drove for 45min to Victoria. Victoria is the capital of BC. Downtown Victoria and the main street, Government Road was closed for the Gay Pride parade. Very colourful, noisy and some sights that you just can't un-see.

Barb, Andrew, Fiona and William came down to join us. Had a great lunch at the Old Spaghetti Factory, then off to do some sightseeing and shopping. Despite

looking up on the internet that Camoflage Ca would have a Gerber Dime, they didn't have any. I was very disappointed. So picked up a Shemagh and a cap for Brayden. Over the road though was a store called Mex. Mex is a co-op for outdoors sports. Climbing, tramping, canoeing etc. As a co-op they can sell only to members. Luckily for me, Andrew is a member. So got a Gerber Dime for me and another for Ant's birthday next week.

We walked up the famous Fan Tan alley in Chinatown. A street just 5 feet wide with shops off to the side. Has been in plenty of movies over the years.

The kids managed to talk mummy and daddy into 2 purchases. Firstly they got some Onsie PJ's with a 'Bear Bum' bum flap on them. Then they wanted emoji cushions. Issue got a pink emoji 'poo' called 'Pinkie and Brayden called his rainbow emoji poo', 'smelly.' Grandma made the mistake of asking on the bus why he called him 'smelly'. Well she set herself up on this as the answer was 'because he is a Poo'!

In the afternoon we headed for a 35min drive to the Bchart Gardens. An amazing 55 acres of gardens. From the origins of a disused Limestone quarry, the gardens have grown over the years and are now an internationally well known attraction.

Poor Andrew managed to put his car into a ditch turning around, so Barb and the kids joined us at the Gardens after a 2.5km walk. Andrew eventually got the car going and joined us an hour later.

Before long, it was 5:45 and time to head off to the ferry for the ride back home. The ride will be 1.5 hours, so with the Hotel being 1hr from the ferry terminal we are expecting to get home around 9:30pm. Ryan our Driver/Guide has been fantastic. Great stories on the history of everywhere we went, the occasional joke and generally made everything flow really well.

Home finally around 10:30pm. Grabbed some pizzas for dinner then late to bed.

Disney Wonder, Monday 10th July 2017

A late start due to not going to bed until midnight. First news is that Andrew couldn't get the car started after they left the Bchart gardens so it got towed and Barb's brother had to come pick them up.

Check out at 11am and had an early lunch. Whilst lunch was ordered I walked a 1.4km round trip up the road to buy a SD card and a new cable to charge my phone.

A quick walk down to the waterfront then off in our taxis to the ship. Unloading the bags painless, check in, fairly painless, immigration also painless. It all just took a bit of time. We did have a 15 minute wait for the rest of the family to catch up so we could do the obligatory family photos, then on board we went.

We have a cosy cabin with plenty of drawers to store our clothes. All but one suitcase fits under the bed. The kids have a convertible sofa for Izzy and a drop down top bunk for Brayden. Our bed was fairly comfortable too.

The show on the top deck to open the cruise as we left the terminal was pretty good. The kids enjoyed dancing to the music. Even I wiggled the glutes a little. Dinner in Tiana's restaurant was pretty good. Brayden had 2 servings of Mac'n Cheese he loved it so much. I had the Salmon starter and Shrimp Main. Followed up by Baked Alaska. The girls got their photo with Princess Tiana then we retired for the night. I read until 12:30am then had a poor sleep from then, but at least the bed was comfortable.

Disney Wonder, Tuesday 11th July 2017

A shocking nights sleep for me last night. Read to 12:30am then managed to doze on and off through the rest of the night. Whole family eventually up close to 10am for breakfast in the Cabana restaurant. So much food to choose from.

It's a day at sea today.

Missed the 9:15 opportunity for the kids to do Miles from Tomorrowland, but managed to do a walk of the ship to get a lot of the clues for Anna's Challenge. Turned out we got some wrong as Leanne had to do an 8pm walk after dinner to get the rest.

Found the games area on top of the Bridge so the kids could play some foozball. Then off to the Oceania Club for the Captain America superhero training. Left the kids there until ready for lunch. Again at the Cabana and ate far too much.

Bit of a lazy afternoon which included a little sleep for me as the kids had a swim. Leanne found the laundry and then after a few wines and watching the scenery, time for the big dress up dinner in Tritons restaurant. Again sumptuous food. There is always one and my salmon was over cooked. I was eating it but the crew did replace it with a perfectly cooked specimen.

Izzy's tooth fell out when she brushed her teeth and went down the drain. I couldn't retrieve it without a pipe wrench to undo the u-bend unfortunately.

Have nearly read my second book of the cruise.

Disney Wonder, Wednesday 12th July 2017

A better sleep but not great last night. Clocks went back an hour last night too so a bit extra time to lie in bed. Izzy got \$5 (NZD) from the Tooth Fairy last night. A very happy little girl.

Our bathroom configuration at first seems a little strange. Separate toilet with large vanity, then separate bathroom with shower over a small bath and tiny vanity. But it works well as Leanne first in the shower could move to the other 'bathroom' to get dressed and do make up etc whilst I had my shower. Then cycle through Brayden after me. Izzy had a nice bath and hair wash yesterday after swimming.

Breakfast in the Animators Palette this morning. We got a visit by Goofy, Pluto and Mickey.

Today was glacier day. We couldn't get up the Tracy Arm due to too much ice. So we went up another one, not so much ice. Glad I wasn't the captain though as there was still enough ice in a narrow fiord to worry me.

We got quite close in the end. Probably still some 4-500m from the edge of the glacier, but still fairly close. Saw some calving of ice and heard a few big cracks. Lots of seals on the icebergs and some great photos to be had. Got a bit cold on the top deck as we went up the fiord. But worth it for the view.

Dinner tonight also in the Animators Palette. Another great meal.

Skagway, Thursday 13th July 2017

First day ashore today in Skagway. Today was also the day that Brayden chose and we did the family challenge. A short bus trip to the location, a mock old fashioned village. First up we panned for gold. Between the 4 of us we got 6.5 grains of gold. About \$70 USD worth.

Next up we did the sled dog visit. A bit of education on sled dogs and the Ititarod race from a musher. We then got to have a session with the dogs and Matt who has

done about 5 Ititarods. The dogs were pretty cool and after some petting we got a demo of them pulling a sled around the yard. Last up was puppy time. One of the dogs had a litter of 5 just 2 weeks ago. Very cute.

Some facts on the Ititarod. 1049 miles between Anchorage and Nome. Teams can have a max of 16 dogs. Temperatures can go to 60 below. Mushers need depots for their stores as each dog can eat up to 14,000 calories per day. The team will go through up to 1200 booties for the dogs.

Another fact is the Siberian Huskie which we all think pull sleds (as in the movies) are really just show dogs that have been around since the 1930's. The Alaskan Huskie whilst now a recognized breed, is really a mongrel. Bred from a whole lot of dogs for certain traits.

Following the show, it was shopping time. Lets just say that Leanne enjoys her shopping and will dedicate as much time as required. A few bargains were had but despite the really good deal offered on a Black Diamond ring, we left it in the store.

Dinner tonight in Tiana's place. Another great meal finished off with a 'Happy Birthday' serenade from the staff to Ant.

Following dinner we had a topdeck 'Frozen' show. Izzy was in heaven enjoying the music, the characters and dancing under the 'snow' fired out from bubble cannons.

We then dropped the kids into the Oceaneers Club whilst we had a nightcap in the Crown and Finn bar before retiring. I have an early morning for Salmon Fishing tomorrow.

Junneau, Friday 14th July 2017

Super early morning (sort of as normally start work at 6am) and up for breakfast @ 6:45am, ready to head off for Salmon Fishing @ 7:15am.

Well organized by a bunch who couldn't organize a booze up in a brewery. So after half an hour quay side sorting parties into boats we were off on the busses. Those little things like failing to advise up from that boats could take parties up to 6 would have been something good to publicise up front. When a family of 20 turn up expecting to go on the same boat, it goes downhill from there.

Anyway Stuart and I went on one boat with a family of 4 from Georgia, USA. Ant and Adam went on a boat with a family of 3. In their case, the boat was ideal for 4

fishing, but they had 5 and no deck hand. Ours was a perfect for 4 but rated for 6. Anyway the 2 kids didn't take up too much room.

Brody was skippered by Dave and the deckhand Dusty was a sophomore from Georgia too as it turned out. His mum was born in Alaska and he loved fishing.

So we set off in this small flybridge cruiser to the fishing grounds. A whole 2km from the harbor. They use downriggers with 2 rods set each side. 1 @ 50' and the other @ 25'. We trolled for a while, then I broke a fingernail. So out comes the Gerber Dime and I am trimming away when the first fish grabs a lure. So my turn on the rod, but not ready and therefore Stuart got the first fish. Quite fitting really that he got first honours. Made my day.

Well the oldest son of the family from Georgia (Noah) was a little trigger happy so we lost a few over the day. Biggest disappointment was a whopper that Stuart lost. We got a double hook up and the first fish was netted with some problems so Stuart held back on hauling too hard awaiting the net to clear and his got off.

Well salmon fishing is interesting. We got mostly Pink Salmon today and they ranged in size from a good sized Kahawai to a small Kingfish. However they didn't fight hard. In fact the rule was 'fish on' then wind as fast as you can. Don't pump the rod or let the tip down. The barbs are fairly small and its almost like winching them in on the 20lb mono we had.

In the end, we kept 11 fish. 3 each to Stuart and I landed. We let the family from Georgia keep them. They opted to have them filleted and sent home. It rained the entire time, but we had fun. Our crew were pretty good, but for the almost mandatory gratuity, there were a couple of things they should be thinking about a bit more. EG no move to clean the blood from the cockpit. It did this myself.

Funny enough, back at the dock, another boat had 19 fish. Some quite large, The deskie was gutting them into the cockpit, then the skipper on the duckboard would wash them and toss them onto the wharf, The cockpit was a sea of blood and guts which was just being huffed over the side in the marina. Easy meal for the seals I presume.

A bonus for us was some humpback whales including a calf cruising the bay.

Our driver took the long way home. We got a 5 min stop off at the Humbolt Glacier and another at the Fish Hatchery to see the salmon run and see some more eagles. They are huge birds.

So tick another couple off the bucket list: Another glacier, eagles and most importantly I have now caught salmon.

Back on land, the port was Juneau. Leanne took the kids on a Dog Sled adventure up in the boonies. They got a good ride and the kids got to play with the puppies. We all got home about the same time. Just time for a quick shower then into town for some quick shopping.

Dinner in Titans tonight wasn't bad, but the worst of the trip. Just little things let it down tonight like me getting Leanne's medium well venison and she got my medium rare.

After dinner the kids wanted to go to the Oceaneer's Lab so we went to the Crown and Finn for a couple of drinks whilst we played 80's trivia/ At 8:30 Leanne picked up Izzy and Emily to take them to the Frozen Show in the theatre. Brayden just wanted to stay in the Lab playing video games whilst I came home to keep up with the blog.

Ketchikan, Saturday 15th July 2017

Got into port a little early this morning, so we could all go ashore at 11am for a quick look round and shopping. Mummy suckered again by the kids and they walked away with some new bits and bobs. Izzy mostly just wanted a lolly. So consistent in this.

Beside EFFY where we went to get the \$10 necklace was another jeweler. The guy there, a nice Indian man used to work for Pascoes in 2009. So knew NZ well. Quite the salesman also and kept up the pressure including free drinks for the kids. Although he was unsuccessful with the big score he was after, Leanne did get a nice pendant from his shop.

By then we were running short on time, so back to the ship for a quick lunch then mummy off on her Zip Line Adventure. Kids wanted to go to the Oceaneers Lab, so I went for a larger walk around town then back to read a little before picking them up for the 3pm Lumberjack show.

So we are lined up outside for this and it has started to spit a bit. So they lined us up in the shop for 15 minutes. Hot and stuffy it was too, then finally allowed into the compound. The seating was covered and there were roof heaters, so it was quite pleasant whilst the rain got a bit harder. The show itself is a little corny, but

the lumberjacks themselves are quite skilled. Kids enjoyed it and so too did Grandma and Papa who joined us after their 'flight'

A very wet mummy came home after having great fun on her zipline experience done mostly in the rain.

Dinner in Animators Palate was fun. First we had to draw some 'people' on a template on our placemat. These were collected and scanned. Later in the show they were put up on the big screens on the walls and even integrated into a computer generated show they put on. Very cool.

Clocks went forward tonight so we wanted the kids down early. But Izzy wasn't co-operating so took an hour to get her to settle. I wasn't much help as had a fair amount of cream on my pudding, so was feeling rather ill. I should know better. Overall a better sleep in the end thanks to sleeping pills at 10pm and 2am.

Day at sea, Sunday 16th July 2017

All at sea today. So a pretty lazy day for all. Still we all managed to get a few things done. Kids as per normal enjoyed some time in the clubs. Izzy also had the Princess session where we organized to have photos with Ariel, Cinderella, Belle and Tiana. Brayden had his photo with Captain America.

With the weather getting milder as we return to Vancouver, the kids also enjoyed a swim whilst Ant and I had a drink on the upper deck. Started off a bit overcast then the sun came out and threatened sunburn.

Once again too much food with Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner packing on the kilo's. Need some serious exercise and diet when we get home.

Leanne started packing this afternoon. We need to have our bags out between 8:30 and 10:30pm. Just the last minute stuff now awaiting the last bag and then we are ready. Leanne went to the last show tonight in the Disney Theatre. The kids veto'd this to stay in Grandma and Papa's room to play games. Hope they didn't destroy the place.

Signing off now as Leanne due back soon from the show and being 9:20pm, the kids need to get to bed.

Vancouver, Monday 17th July 2017

An early start as have a mandatory 7:15am breakfast seating at Tiana's. Which was pretty good. Then a long wait standing then sitting on the steps for our debarking time. We have had to wait about an hour for our bags to be cleared before we can leave the ship. With no where to go, we camped out on some stairs near the exit.

We ended up getting an airport shuttle. What a mountain of bags. Stuart & Vivien (3), Ant & Kelly (5), ours (4) including a whole lot of stuff for Vivien, plus carry on luggage. Just room in the shuttle for 1 more family. Cost around \$102+ to get to the airport as essentially they didn't charge for the kids. Great value.

Vancouver airport wasn't the world class place we it earned a few years ago. We got through Premium check in once they confirmed Leanne's Gold Elite so our bags went through free, as did Stuart & Vivien (bags now up to 6 as 3 were in storage at the airport) But Ant left his card at home, so had to pay \$25 CAD per bag. This all took a while. Then we had to get through xray etc. Queues were long. Then off through customs and into the airport. Our original plan would have seen us have around 4 hours in the airport. With all the delays, we had really just over an hour.

Spent most of the hour in the queue for Burger King. Shocking service.

Boarding time came and went with no plane at the gate. Seems it landed from an international flight and as we were departing from the domestic terminal, it had to be towed over!!! So we took off late but had a good flight.

Landing at San Fransisco, we got through fairly fast and then with our bigger mountain of luggage we pondered our transport issue again. We got a 'shared van' in the end. 100% to ourselves. Well again for our \$95+ we got a great deal as Emily and Izzy had to sit on their mummies laps so were free. Bag wise, we were packed to the gills including 2 bags against the side entry door and everyone who didn't have a child on their lap had a carry on to hold.

Our hotel, old and quaint was quite surprising. These 2 bedroom hotel rooms also had a dining and lounge room. Bigger than most appartments.

By the time we unpacked it was time for dinner so we walked almost next door to Kezar's pub.

San Fransisco, Tuesday 18th July 2017

Our early start ended up a later start than planned. However 3 blocks up the street was the Tram/Train. We caught this into Powel St Station in town and then caught the F line Street Car.

A short walk to the ticket office then we were off on our bus tour. We had a great driver and over 3 hours we went over the Golden Gate Bridge, Sutro Baths, Golden Gate Park, Twin Peaks in the wind and fog, down through the Victorian Houses and dozens of points in between. Well worth the tour and our driver was really informative and easy to understand. Clearly loves his job.

He dropped us at Alcatraz Landing to get out tickets. By then it was lunchtime so we grabbed a bite then off to the Island.

A short ferry ride of about 15 minutes on a windy harbor. We then got a briefing from a Park Ranger on arrival and begun our self tour with our head sets on. Only one way to describe what it must have been like to be interned there. Horrible. Couldn't have been that flash for the wardens either with up to 75 families living on the island too. Amenities for the prisoners were extremely basic and discipline harsh. Leanne took Izzy back early as she was pooped. We left on the next boat half an hour later.

We walked down to Pier 39 and Leanne sorted out our tickets for the next 2 days. They gave her a bit of a run around and when we eventually got our vouchers, then had to go off to 3 locations to get our actual tickets. Too late by now to get the Hop On Bus tickets.

So off to Bubba Gumps for another overpriced but yummy meal then walked up to get the Cable Car.

Well these guys couldn't organize a piss up in a brewery it seems. So the thing is a little old and they turn it around on a turntable by hand, but the bit that got us annoyed is the 15 min down time sitting in a room drinking coffee between runs. So there is 4 Cable Cars waiting to turn around, then there is a hundred people in line all getting annoyed. It almost looks like a union thing on a go slow.

Anyway we finally loaded up and waited our 15 minutes then we were off. Leanne stood as an outrider on the right, ne on the left with everyone else except Ant on board the open section. Ant had gone off to the airport to get the van for tomorrow. The Cable Cars are the true authentic thing and work on grabbing and underground cable. They can only stop on the flat bits so if forced to stop on a hill,

they have to back down. So approaching any cars or obstructions or red lights, their bell is dingling away to let people know to let the cable car through. So up we went then, wheeeeeee.... Down we went. All good fun if a little cold.

So off the cable car and on a mission to find toilet. A few were busting to go. Then we caught the train home again, now about 10:30pm.

San Fransisco, Wednesday 19th July 2017

A late morning!! All went well for us, until we went downstairs to say goodbye to the whanau. First problem was the 9 seat van Ant got which was more than big enough, didn't have foldable rear seats. So getting in all the bags (Stuart & Vivien 6, Ant Searls 5, plus carry ons).

So As we were struggling to get the bags on board, Vivien wasn't sure whether or not she would go. Eventually she decided to stay as her room was paid for anyway. So this got the troupe off to a late leaving. They had added complications in that there was a large forest fire in Mariposa County so they would have some routes to Yosemite blocked.

So we packed Vivien's bags back into her room, then got ourselves organized finally to go onto town about an hour and a half later than planned. Vivien came with us as far as Macy's etc in town. We then had to take the F-Line Street Car to the end of the route, then walk to get our bus tickets. Only to find another queue a mile long. Poor Leanne once again battled the beast. By the time we got the tickets and got back to Peir 39 it was after 12 pm. So we then gave the kids a Carousel ride and went to go to the 7D attraction for which we got tickets. Only to find there was a school group there and we couldn't get into after 1pm. Now a tomorrow thing we hope.

Lunch was a huge burger @ Wipeout. Then off to the Aquarium. It's a bit small but there were a few species we don't see in NZ, plus some cute river otters.

After some final shopping at the Pier we headed into town so Leanne could get her Mac and go to Macy's. On the Street Car we caught up with Vivien. By the time we got back to downtown, my ankle, feet and legs were shot. So I took the kids home whilst Leanne tried to shop. She lost a bit of time helping Vivien out so is hoping to go back tomorrow for an hour to finish off.

Off the pub again for dinner. Now packing the bags.

San Fransisco, Thursday 20th July 2017

Final day with a little last minute packing before getting the Hop On/Off bus which we rode through the tour to Pier 39. Kids rode the Carousel a couple of times, once with Grandma. We also did the 7D experience. Essentially we sat in moving chairs, with sound and 3D glasses, shooting bad guys in a mad hat truck derby thingy. Then we did the Mirror Maze a few times before lunch.

Caught the F-Line Street Car again to downtown and off to Macys and Ross Dress for less for last minute shopping before getting the train back to the hotel. We arrived around 4pm with a 4:30pm booking for our shuttle pick up. Grandma now has 4 bags so we need to take one home. Our 4 are right on the limit and I am not sure the extra one will get through without costing us.

Now at Airport typing the last few verses of the holiday.

In summary

- Thanks to Stuarts bucket list wanting to take the kids on a Disney Cruise, we all had an amazing once in a lifetime experience. It took a couple of years to make it happen, but this years cruise on the Alaskan Inside passage coincided perfectly with our July school holidays. A bit of a bonus having to wait a little longer as with Izzy being 5, she could now be left with her cousins or in the onboard Kids Clubs now.
- Vancouver as always is a great city to visit.
- The Times Square suites were great for us. Look forward to going back at Christmas.
- Great to catch up with the Grant family so soon after they came to NZ
- We had some amazing tours. However I need to point out that whilst it was great to experience them, the value for money was poor in most cases.
- The Disney Wonder and its crew are just awesome. Nothing was a problem at all and everyone, especially the kids had a ball.
- San Fransisco is great. It's a first visit for me so got to see a lot of new things. I would like to come back again. Probably try to stay closer to downtown if we can find cheap enough accommodation.
- I have walked so much in this trip, but probably not enough to burn the calories consumed. My ankle, feet, knees, hips and back are all sore as hell.
-