

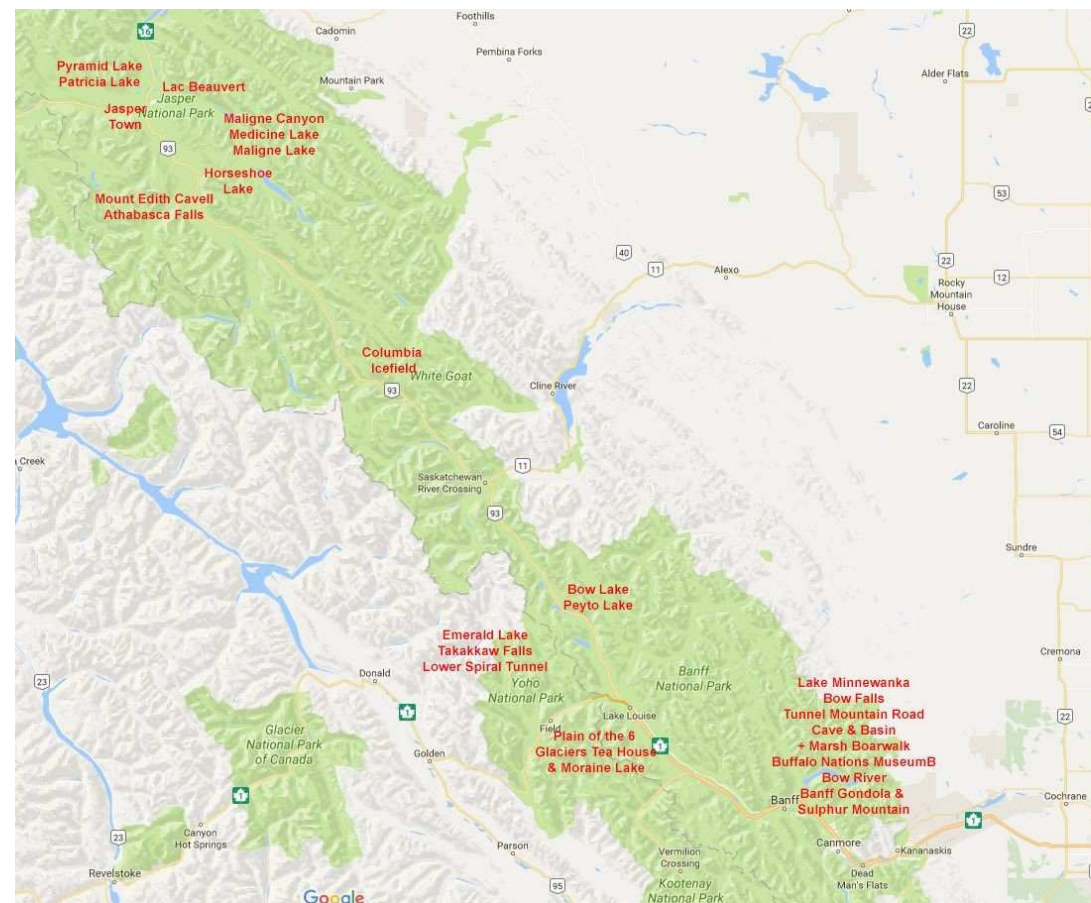
The Canadian Rockies



The Canadian Rockies

This book is part one of a five week journey in The Canadian Rockies, Yellowstone Park, US Glacier Park, Seattle, Vancouver Island, Yosemite Park and San Francisco.

In The Canadian Rockies the weather was variable and at times cold.... but we had a great time.
September 2016



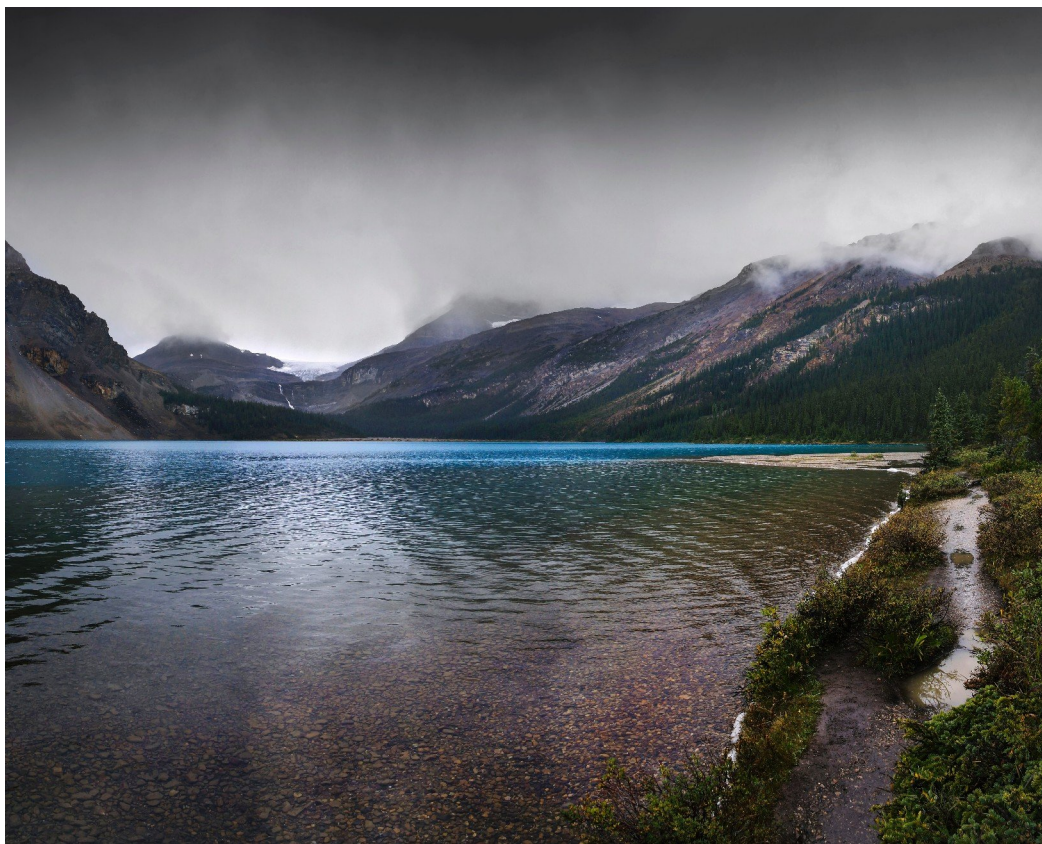
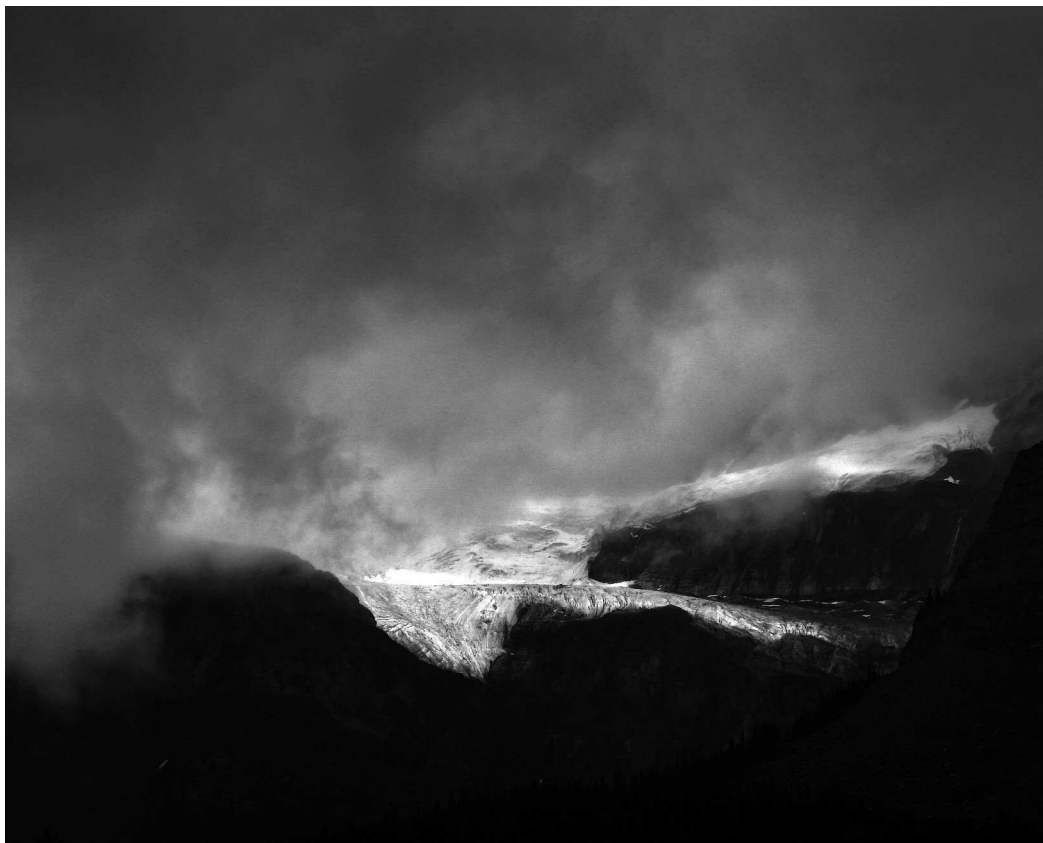


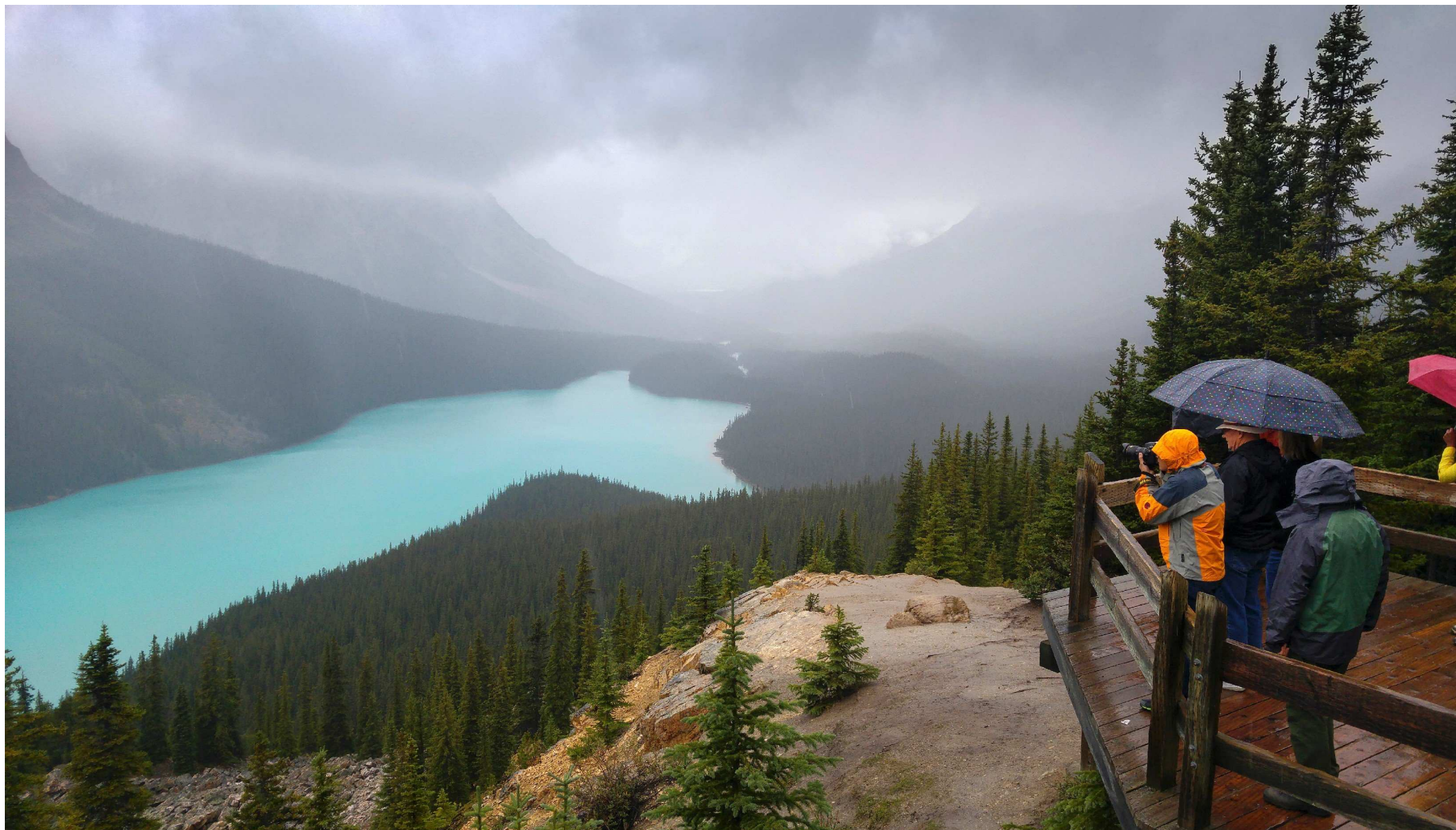
After a ten hour flight from Heathrow we arrived in Calgary and drove straight to Banff. After checking in at The Mount Royal hotel, we grabbed a Buffalo burger and collapsed into bed at Canadian time 9pm (4am UK) to wake up at 6am local time.

Above is the view from our bedroom window at 7am. We left the hotel to find breakfast at the Wild Flower Bakery; reportedly the best coffee joint in town. After filling up with many calories we headed off for some light food shopping, buying a polystyrene food container to keep our food cool in the boot.... One of our most redundant purchases of the year, as it was so cold for the next 12 days it was not used!

We then started on our journey up the Icefield Parkway to Jasper. The blue sky seen from our bedroom window was the last we would see for 36hours.





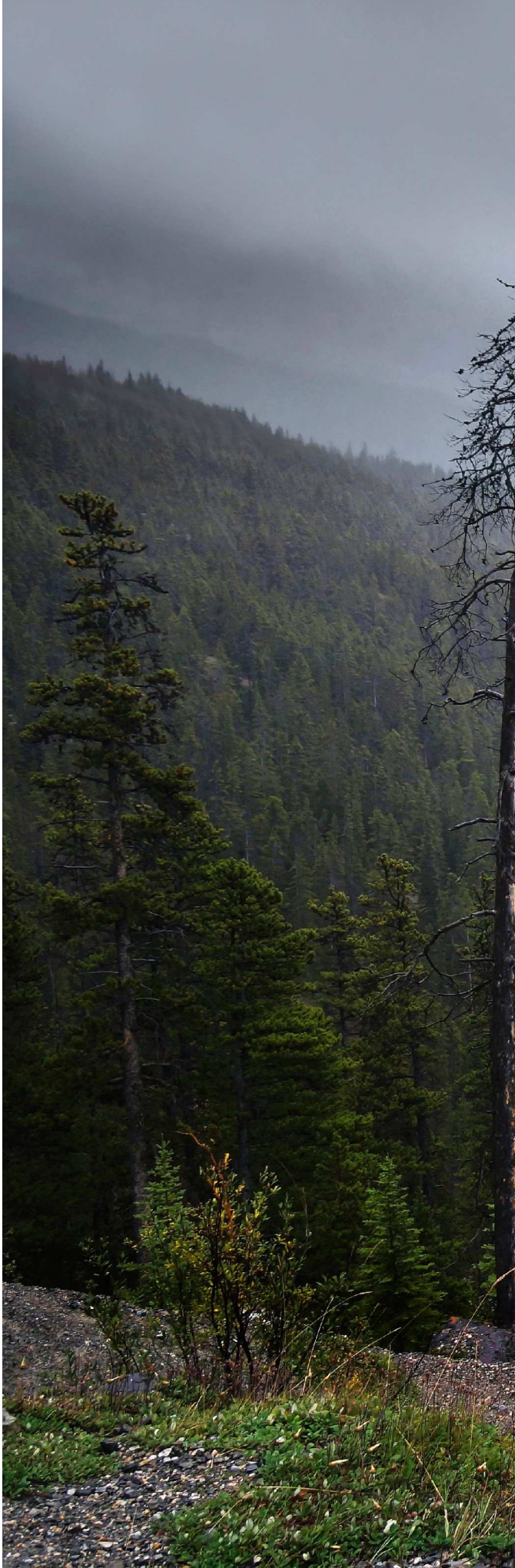


After an hour's drive we arrived at Bow Lake and coffee at Num-Ti-Jah Lodge. Also our first introduction to the National Parks long drop toilets. Whenever you found a flushing toilet you thought your day had been made....if you are fussy that is.

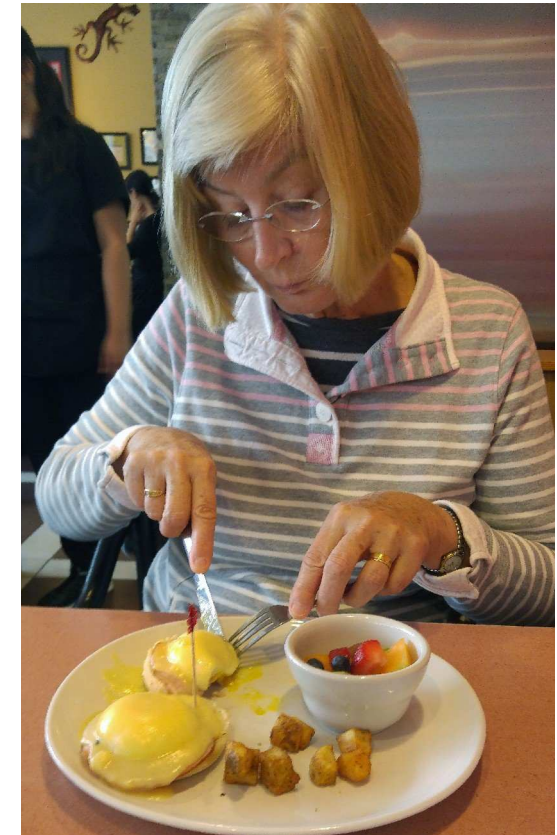
We then drove on to Payto Lake. Donning full waterproofs we walked to the only viewing platform a mile from the car park. Murky though it was, it was still a great view.

Apart from lunch we only stopped for a few photographs and to buy petrol at Saskatchewan River Crossing Resort. This place was our first exposure to life on the Icefield Parkway: empty roads but when you stopped each location was rammed with visitors.





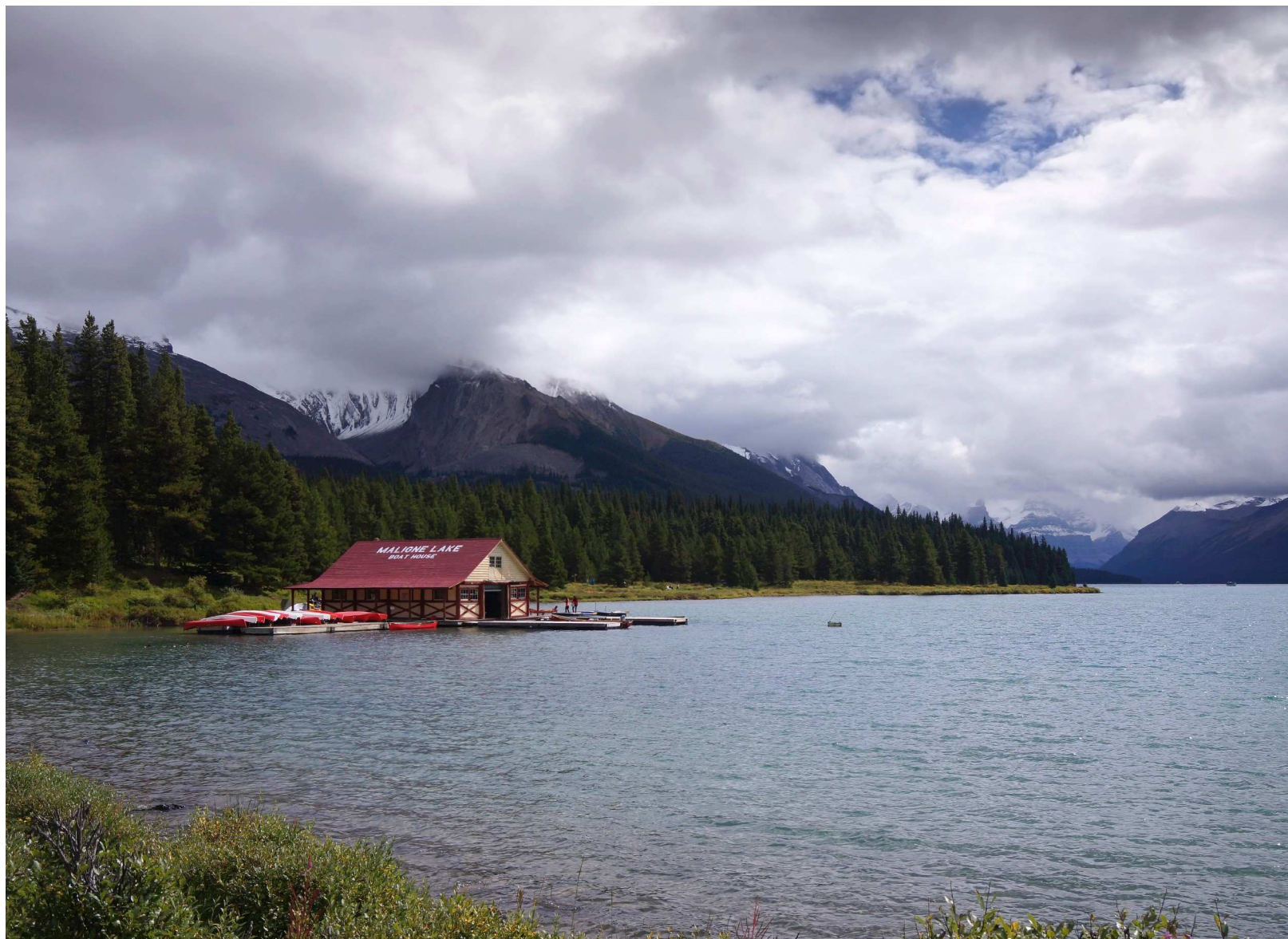




Arriving at the Pyramid Lake Resort we decided to eat at the resort dining room. A kindness would be to describe the food as not the best of the trip. To compensate for this we had a great breakfast the next morning in Smitty's Family Restaurant in the centre of Jasper. It was Saturday morning, packed with locals and a genuine experience.

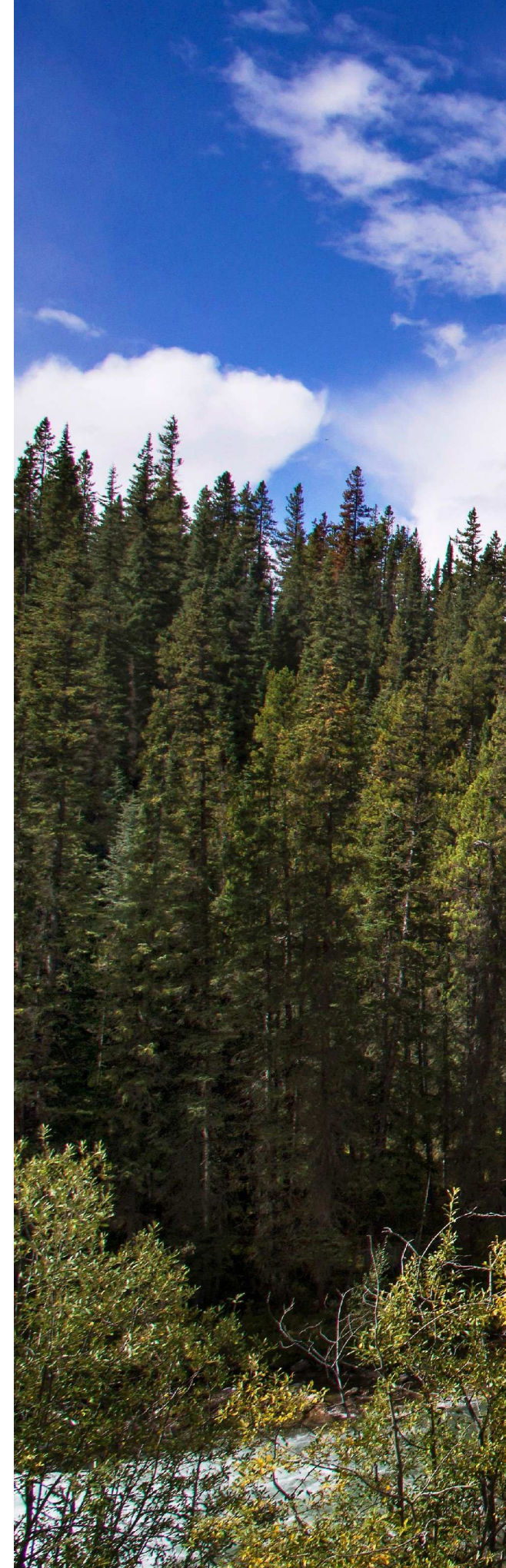
On the way to town a car was parked at an angle near the edge of the road, which we soon learned was a sign of big wildlife; in this case a pair of young black bears stripping the rose bushes of their berries. Safe in our car, we watched them chomping away on the main path and by the road edge, totally disregarding their audience.



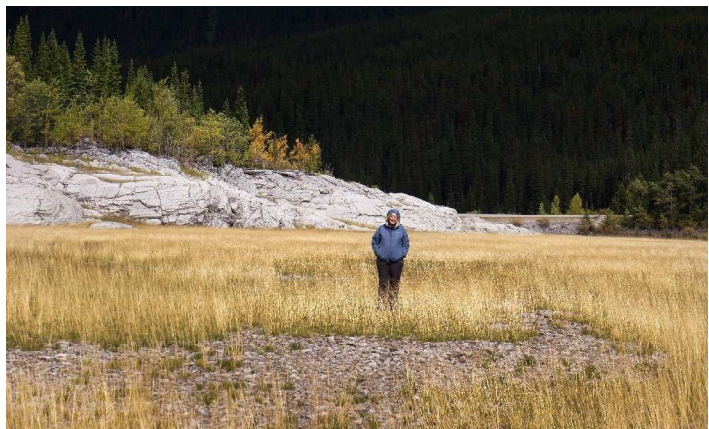
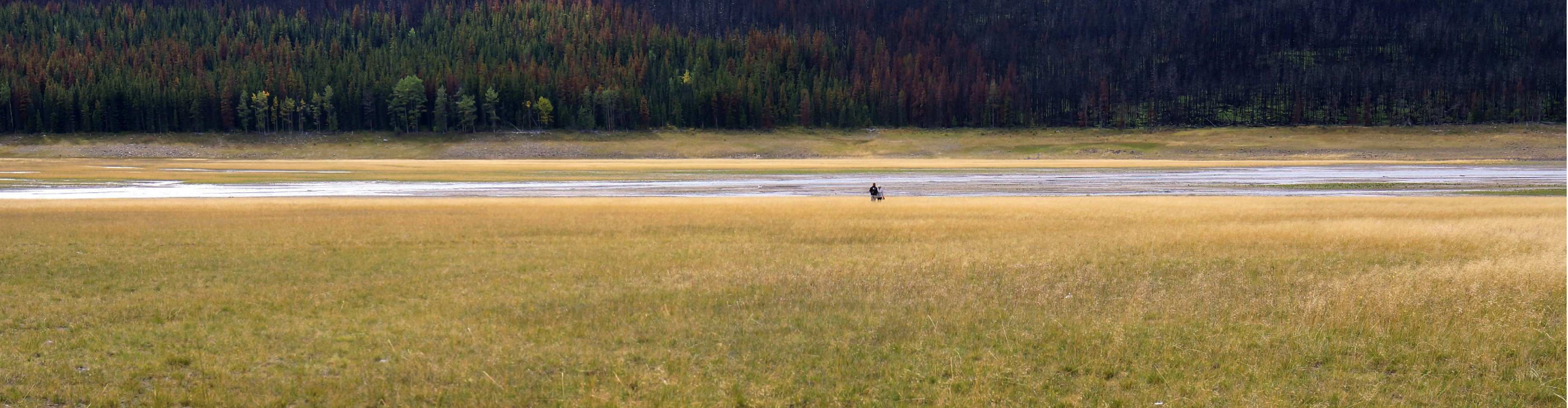


On our first trip from Jasper we drove to Maligne Lake via Medicine Lake and back again.

Right: On the way back the sun appeared at last to give us good views of the mountains.



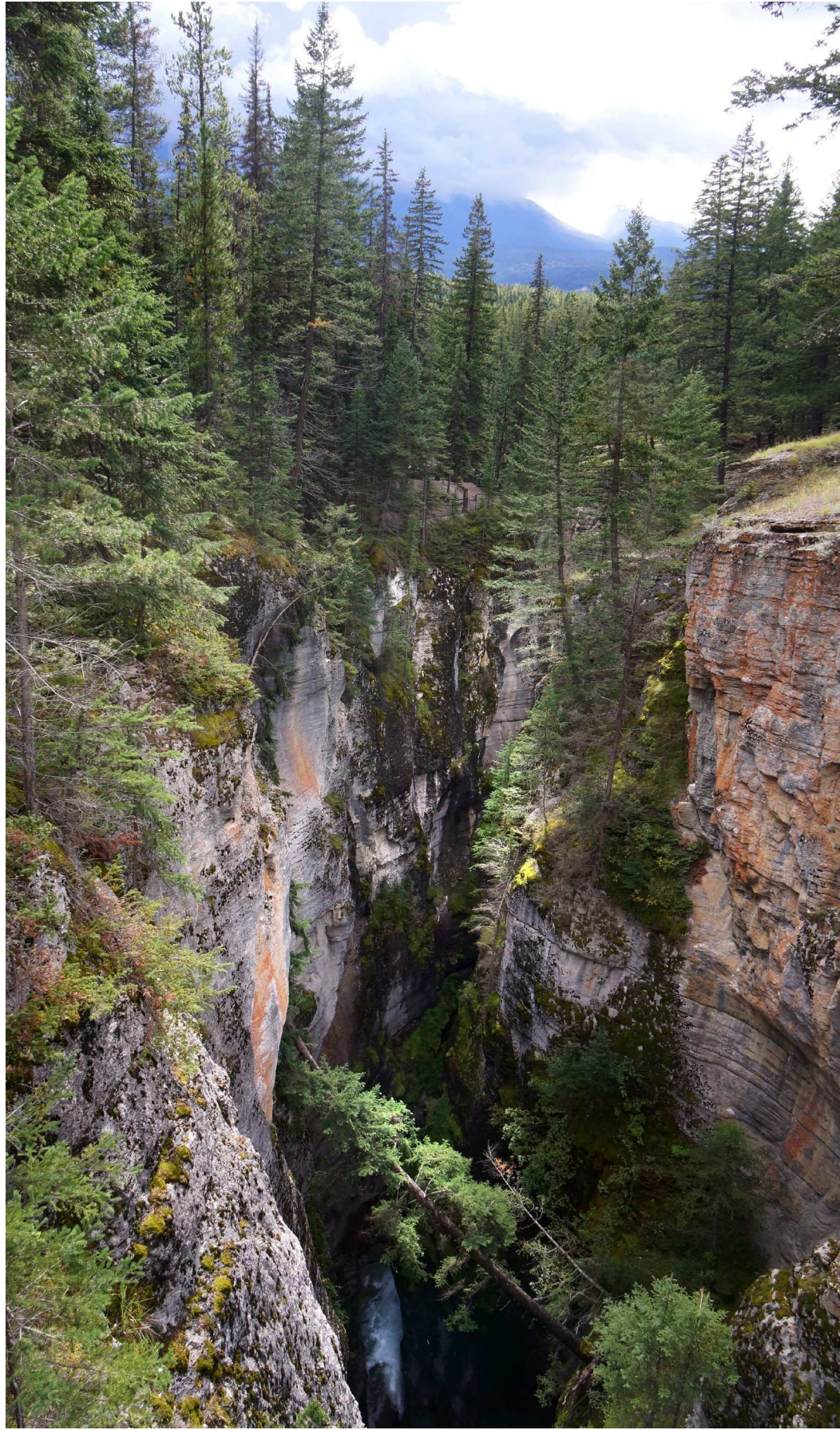






On our return drive we stopped to walk on the edge of Medicine Lake, which has a peculiar effect of draining through rocks in the centre during the summer and appears like a half empty reservoir.

Returning towards Jasper we deviated off the main road to walk three of the five bridges of Maligne Canyon, the first of many waterfalls of the holiday. The day ended with a good meal at The Raven Bistro in Jasper....desrvadly top of the Trip Advisor list for the town.









We had been advised that the 'must see' view near Jasper was of the Angel Glacier on Mount Edith Cavell and the Athabasca Falls, and today looked the best weather to see it all.

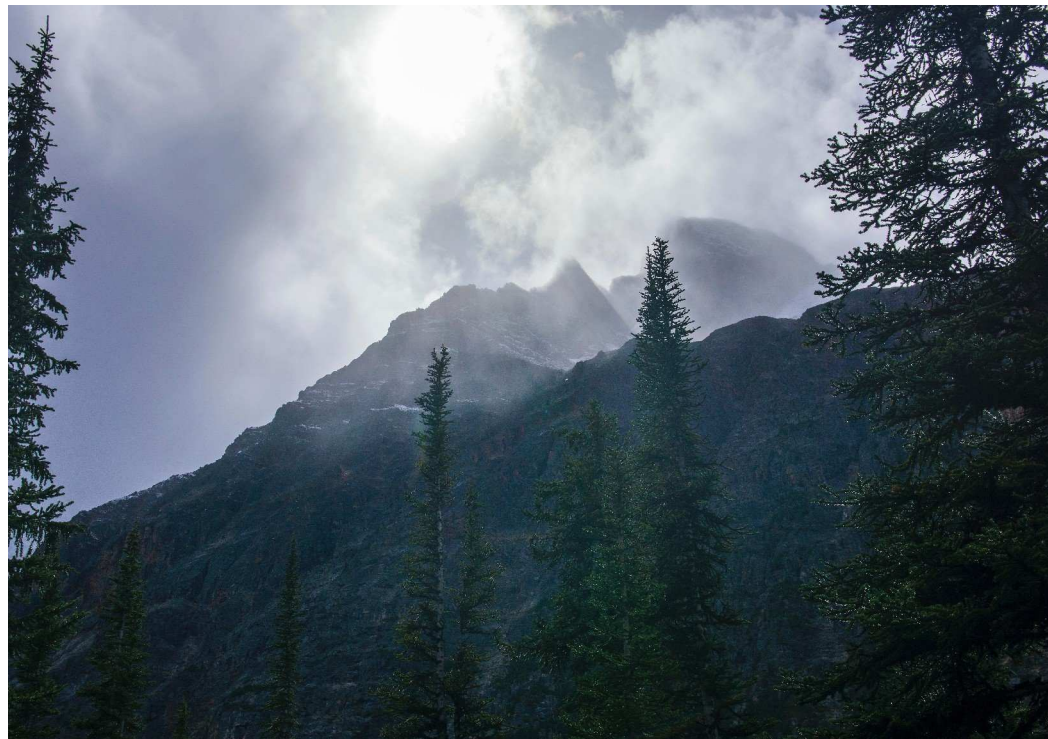
So after a breakfast of granola in our room we bought some substantial rolls in Jasper followed by our first Cappuccino since Banff in the Coin Clean LaundryThe best coffee shop in town, which says a lot for coffee shop potential in Jasper.











We started off with an abortive trip to Marmot Basin, but the road was blocked until the ski season, so we reversed our steps and took the side road to Mount Edith Cavell. This was our first experience of a full car park, fortunately I remembered a lay by a mile back, so we parked there and walked back. The mountain and Angel glacier are spectacular, but you felt they would have been better a few years ago when the glacier was bigger.... But a very worthwhile excursion.

Onwards in the rain we managed a photograph of the Whirlpool River between downpours. The backroad joins the Icefield Parkway at the Athabasca Falls... great views in the sun.









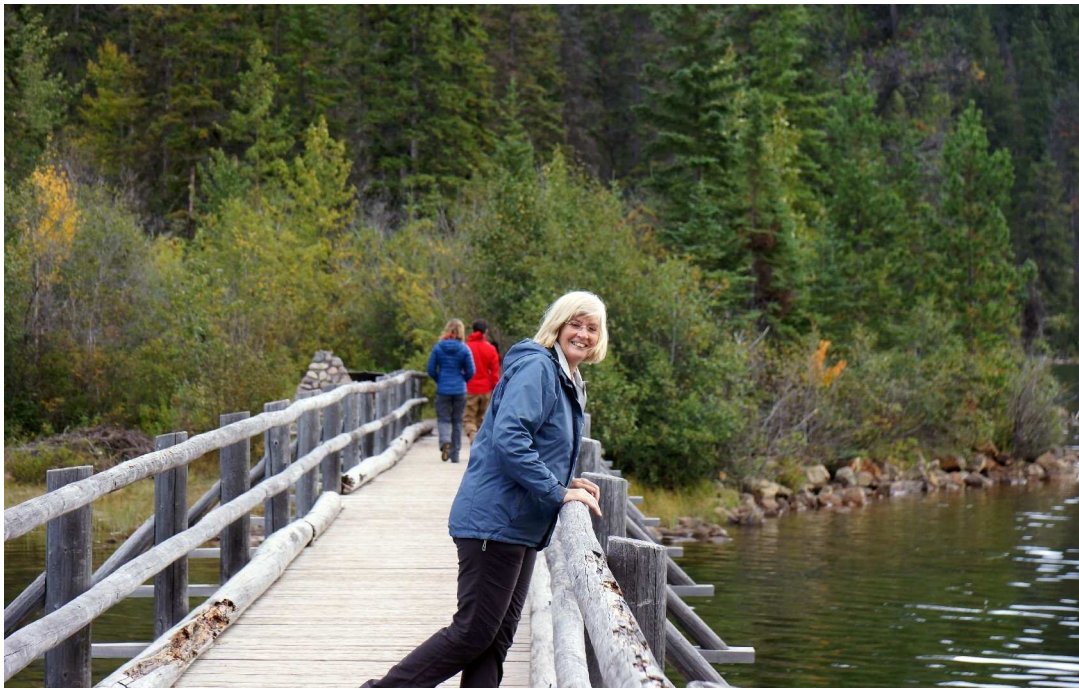




Driving into Jasper this morning we had elk as well as some older black bears, who were scratching on trees, play fighting as well as munching berries. Today we had another coffee before going for a walk around Lac Beauvert. Three quarters of the way round the lake we came to the Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge, so we found another coffee in the basement gallery area. Our aim was to get to Old Fort Point; unfortunately the pathway was blocked because a grizzly bear was in residence.









The weather deteriorated in the morning and continued wet into the afternoon, but we struggled out for a walk by the lake near our hotel.

It described the rock of Pyramid mountain as being pink, which was missed on us in the steady rain. We ate at the Olive Bistro that night.... Sort of OK'ish.

Driving past Lake Patricia on the way home we watched a wondrous sunset, with elk resting by the water's edge.





A new day and sun! As we drove out from our hotel we immediately saw the pink stone of the Pyramid mountain.... Good to see it once, even if we were leaving.

Today we drove down the Icefield Parkway to stay at Lake Louise, visting places we had missed out on the way up.



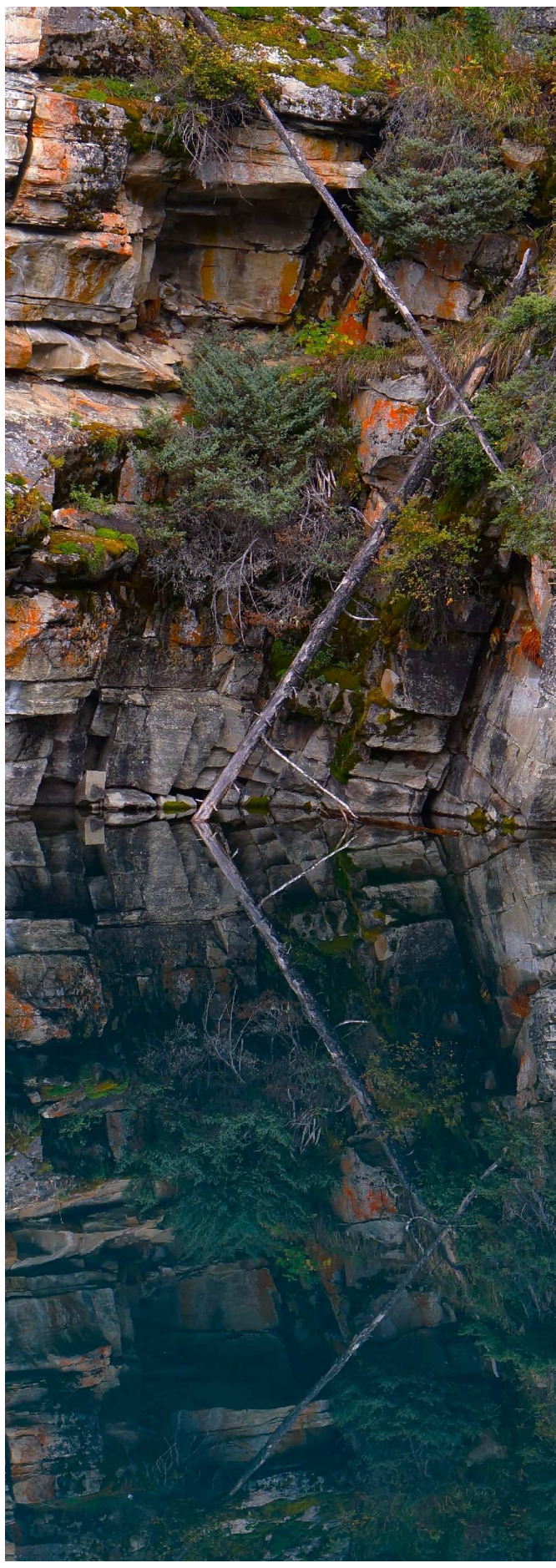
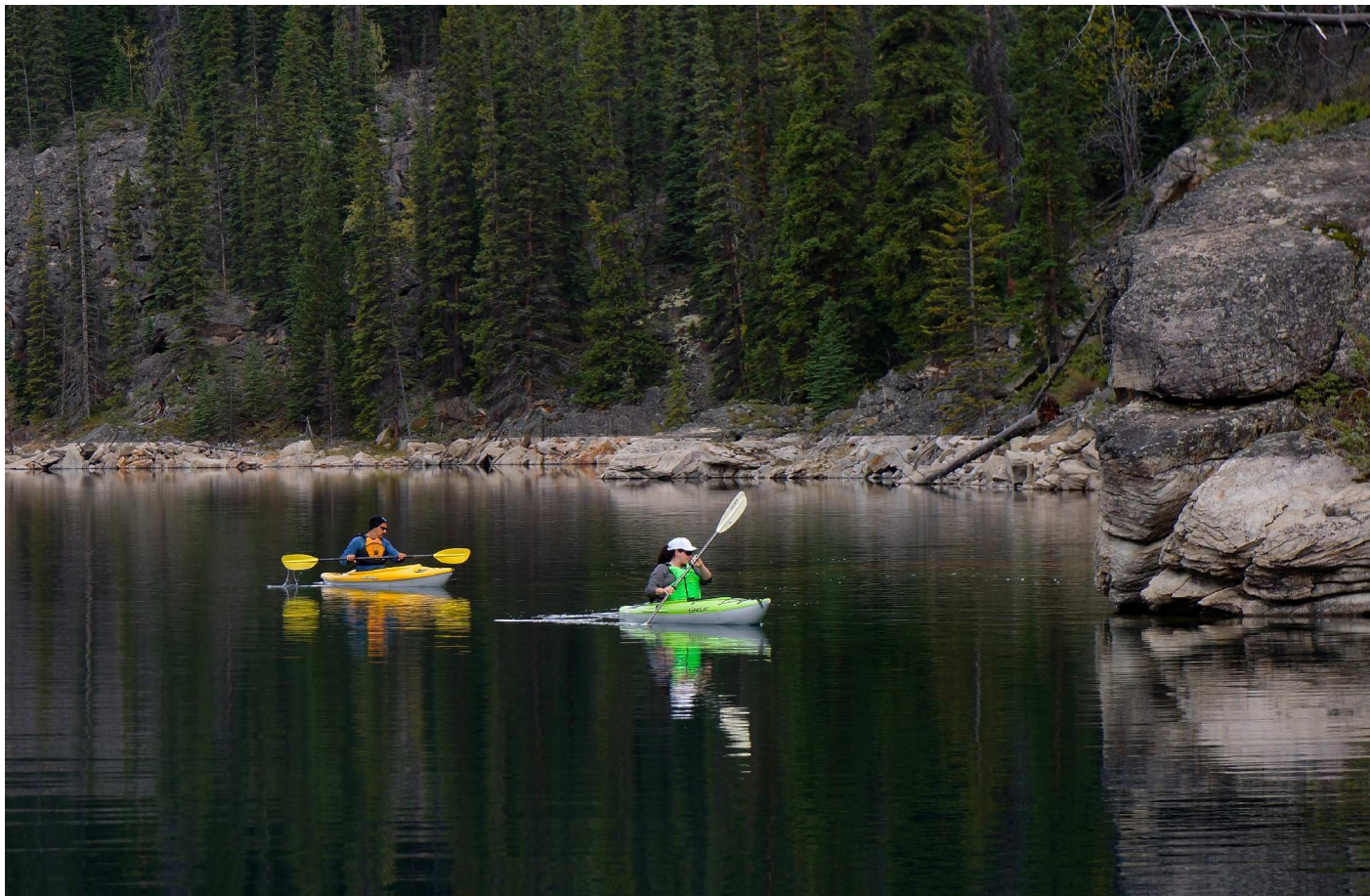
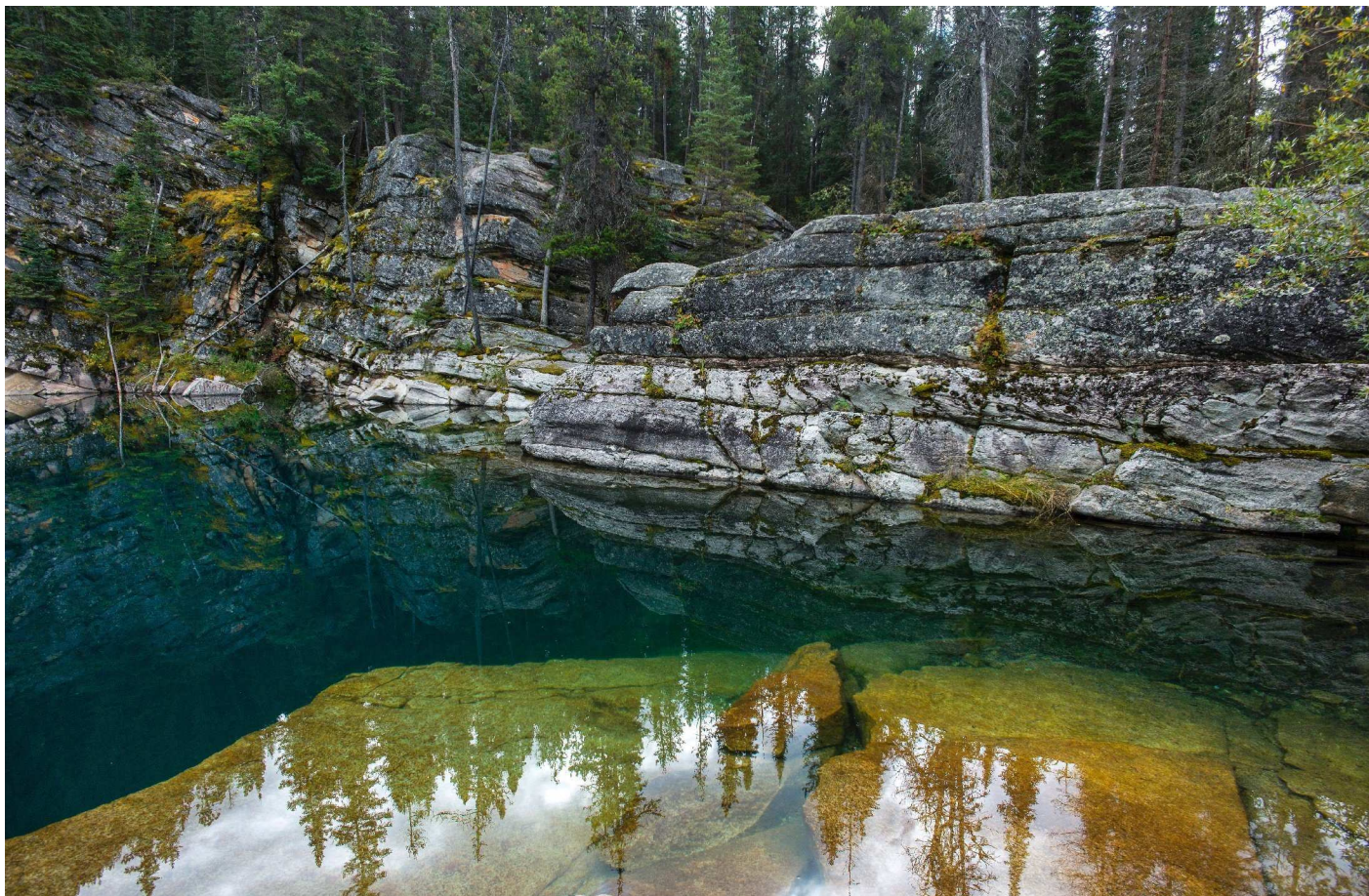
Having done a bit of exchange team photos with another couple at the Athabasca Pass Viewpoint we drove to Horseshoe Lake. Because the area is not mentioned as a top attraction it was almost deserted. There was no wind and the water was like a mirror, one of our favourite places on the visit.

After that we carried on down the Parkway to Sunwapta Falls and very importantly, Sunwapta coffee shop!



























After lunch we visited Columbia Icefield Discovery Centre, for the pleasure of the flushing toilets! The original plan was to book a tour coach to get on the glacier.

Having seen the price of the coach tour, we found a carpark not that far from the icefield and elected to walk. Just the sort of break we wanted after being in the car most of the day.



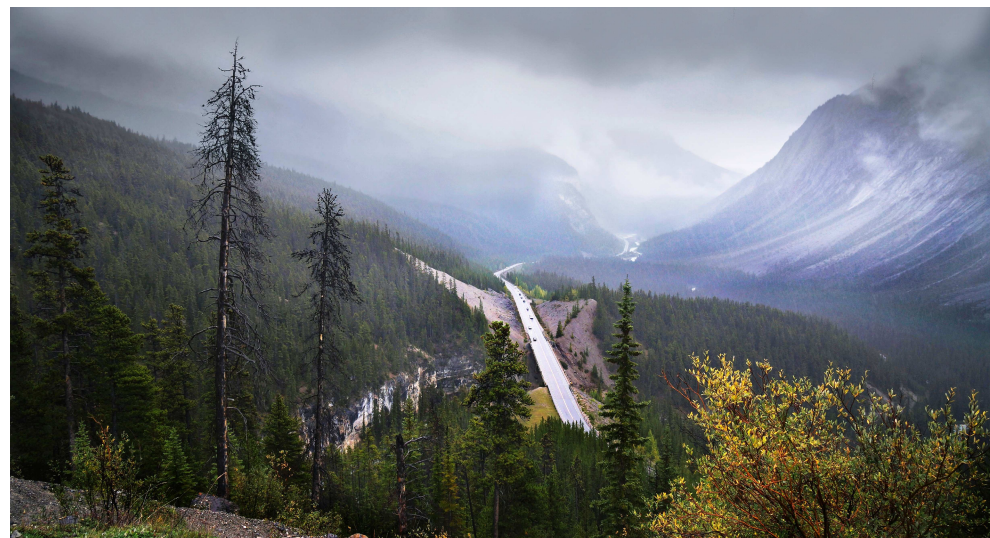






Further down the road there is a big change in height.
I took a picture in the rain on the way up and located the
same spot on the way down the Parkway.

The first picture had more drama, but we enjoyed the sun
(OK, more lack of rain) in the second.







We spent two days at Lake Louise. The weather on the first day was great, so having filled ourselves up with granola and fruit we walked to the Plain of Six Glaciers Teahouse.

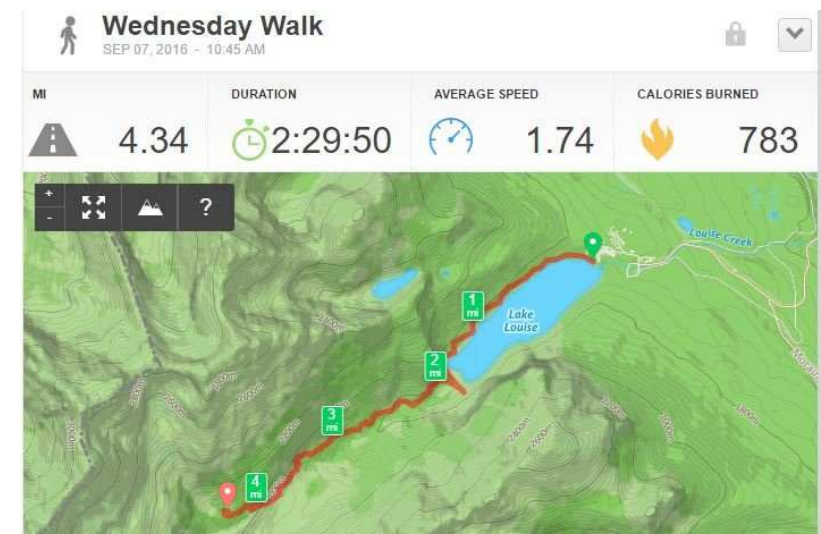
The walk starts off with an easy one mile stroll around the lake edge, you then leave 99% of the crowds behind as you start climbing through the woods. The views were terrific, sadly the distance and incline was a little bit tough for half of the party, but after a quick visit to the smelliest toilets of the trip and soup in a very packed tea house, we managed to make it back in one piece.

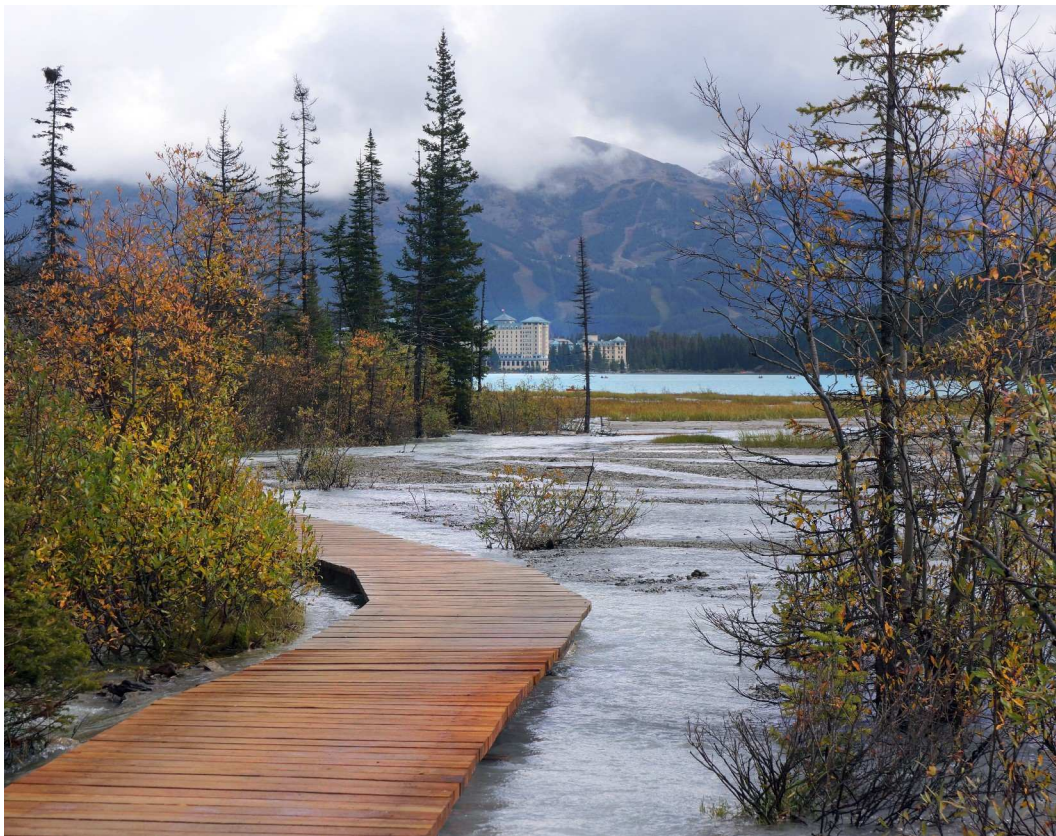




I recorded the distance on my runkeeper one way. The return trip was 8.7 miles with a climb of 360mtrs or 12,000 feet so we felt as though we had 'achieved'.

In the evening we ate at the Lake Louise Railway Station and Restaurant, a great place in a sea of very expensive or poor quality restaurants. Over our supper the discussion about walking the Swiss mountain passes next year was a very short one....

















We met our friend on the left on the way back from our walk in Lake Louise, scrounging food off tourists.

The next day we drove to Yoho National Park along highway one to British Columbia. In the Field visitor centre we met (the deceased) Jake, the Black Bear. We read all the story labels about how he kept returning to the town despite determined efforts by Mr Ranger to return him to the wilderness. In the end the last label explained he was 'destroyed' (or killed!) as he was a danger to the town's people.

Outside the centre, opposite our hire car were a well-dressed Chinese couple eating their picnic lunch up and admiring their hired Lamborghinis'. They then got into the two cars, one each, and sped off.

Before we arrived in the town of Field, we were just in time to see a long goods train using the Lower Spiral Tunnel. All very exciting until we met the same, now very slow train, in the town as we tried to get across the tracks.

Field is a delightful small railway town with a café that served drinkable coffee and great cakes. Following our break we admired the best of Canadian Pacific rolling stock and drove on to a waterfall called Natural Bridge.

After absorbing the nuances of this waterfall, we drove on to Emerald Lake. We took a short walk by the lodge buildings and along the lake shore. The rain drove us back to our car and on we went to the impressive Takakkaw Falls. These falls are the second tallest falls in Canada; they were different, tall and elegant rather than short, fat and brutish. Photographic activity was hindered by a Japanese couple with a full frame camera, tripod etc. just for taking selfies...not the view.

In the evening we cut our losses looking for another restaurant and went back to the excellent Lake Louise Railway Station.

.....A grand day out!

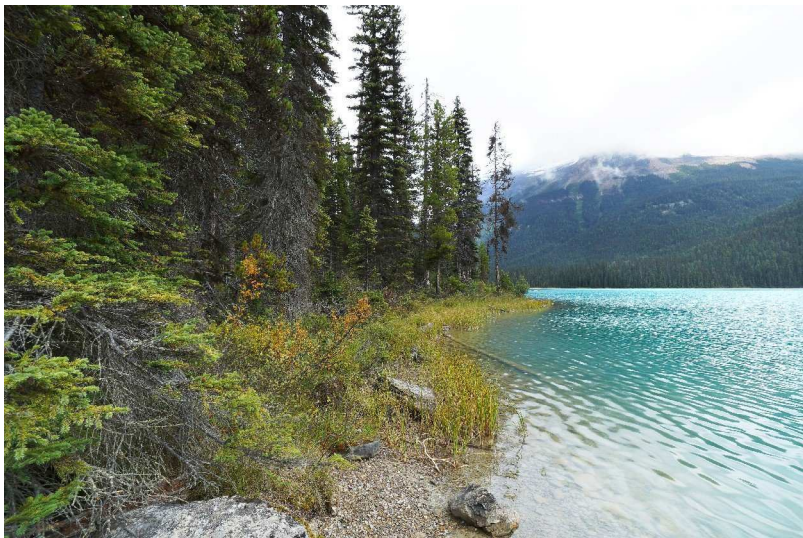


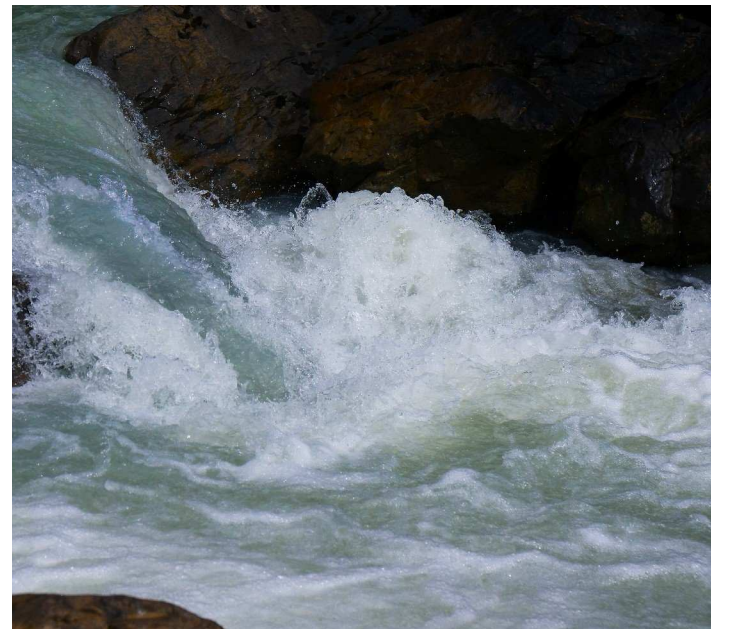
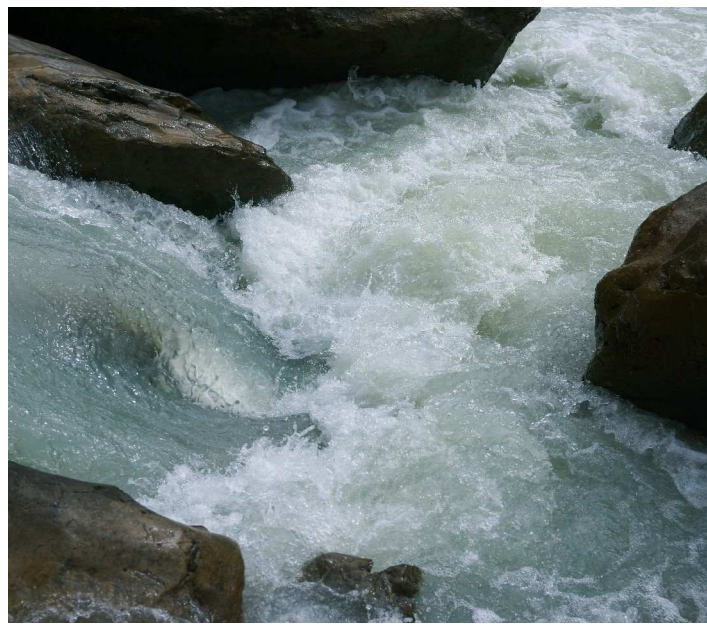




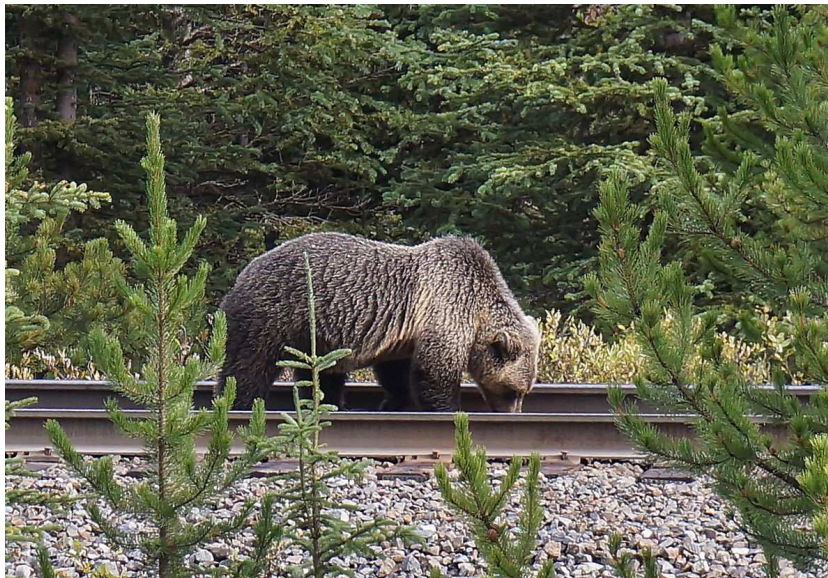












Our day in Yoho National Park was completed by watching a Grizzly Bear searching for grain spillage along the railway track. The bear was drawing a big crowd of cars and sightseers, but couldn't care less as he got on with his job of the day....searching for food.

The next day we planned to visit Lake Moraine, but could not find a parking space, so we abandoned this and headed for Banff.

Taking the Bow Valley Parkway visiting Morant's Curve where the famous advertising pictures are taken showing railways and The Rockie Mountains, sadly there were no trains when we were there.









Further down the road, near Banff we came to Johnson Canyon, all very impressive we took a long walk to its furthest point.

It wasn't just the waterfalls that were good to look at, at every turn there seemed to be something new. The travertine rock at the end was just huge.

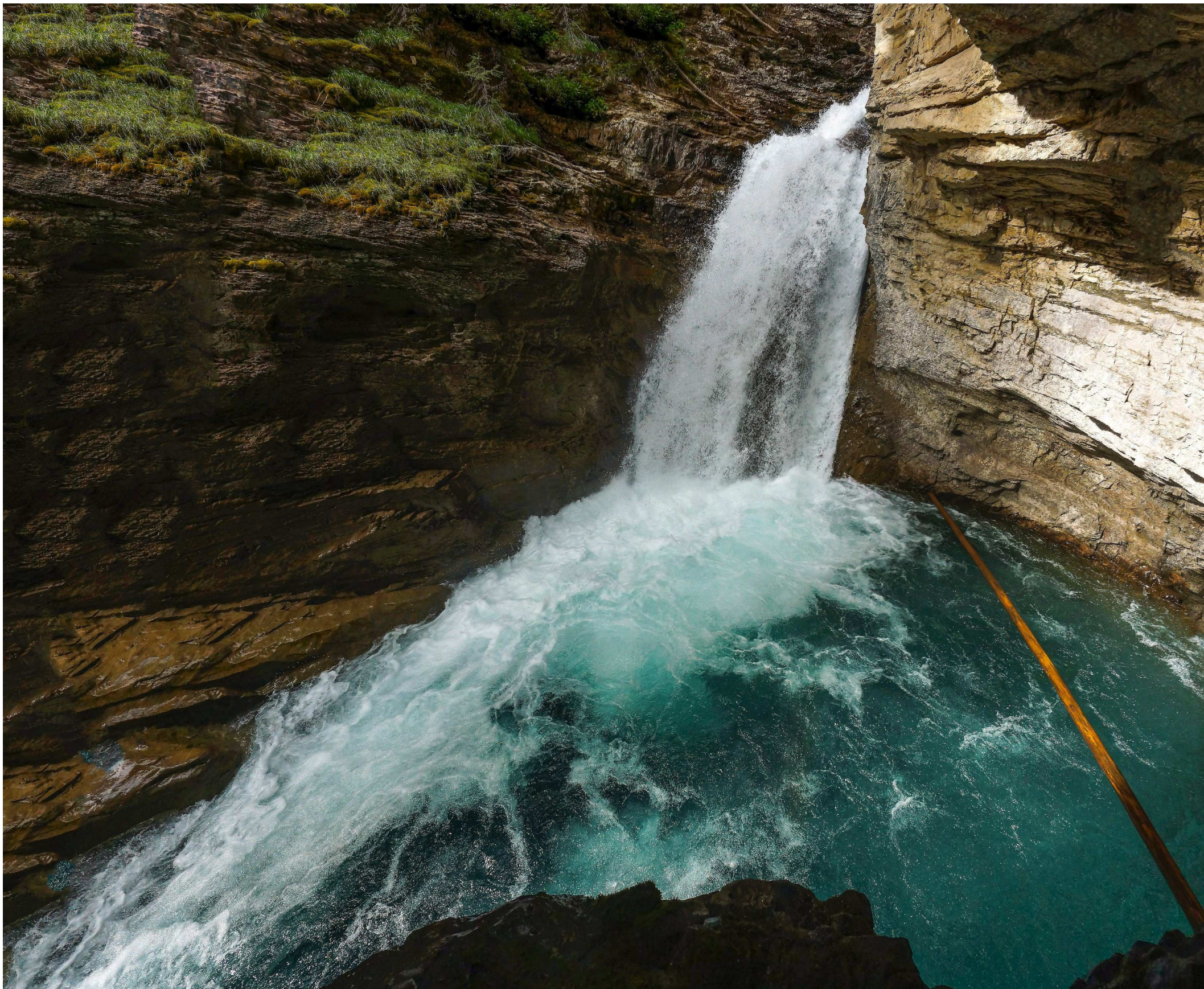
Also one of us was learning the skill of photobombing.

By now it was getting late, but we were unhappy at missing Moraine Lake, so we reckoned there must be car parking space by now and drove the 40 miles back to the lake.















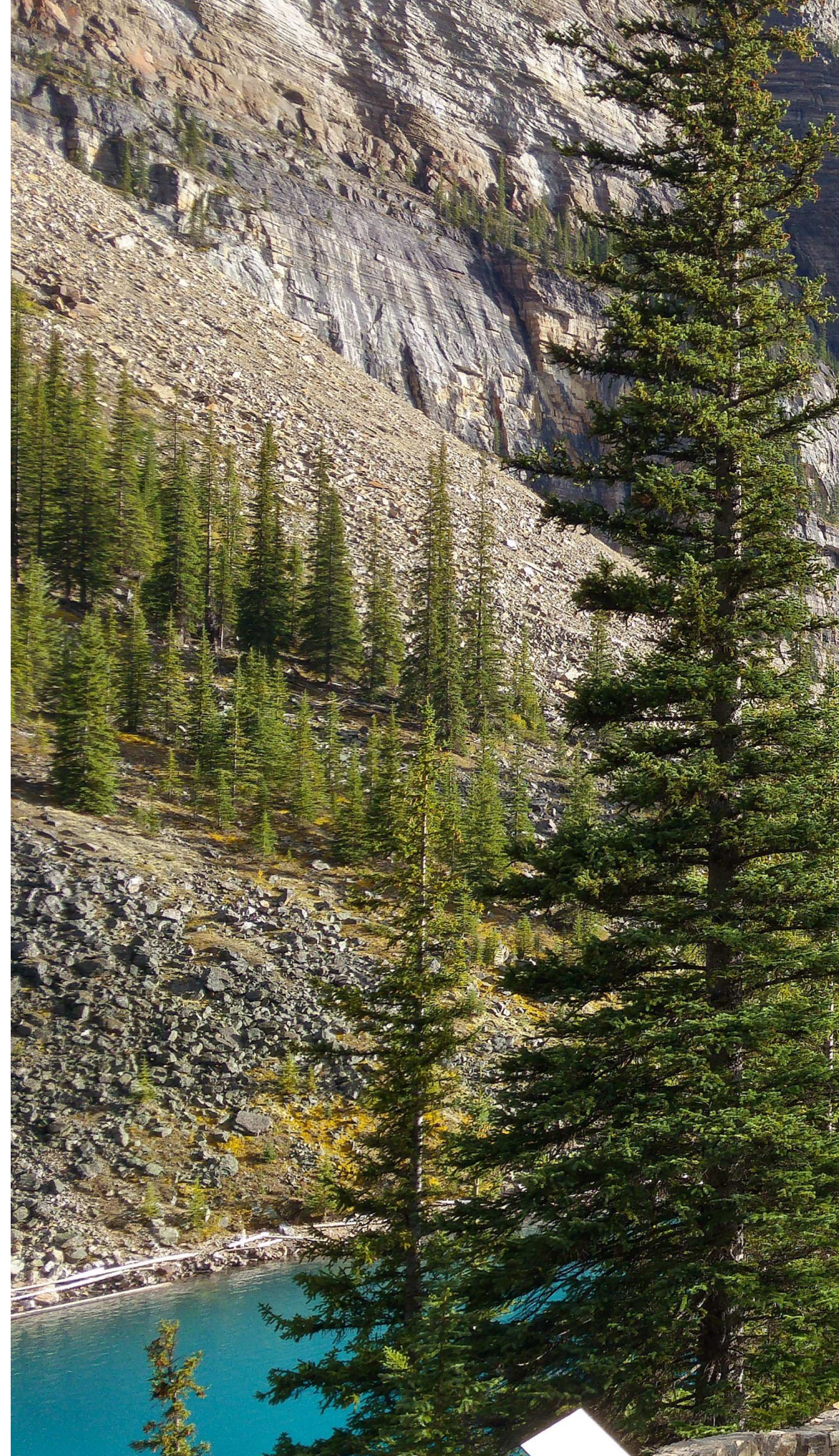
Arriving at Moraine Lake at 6pm , there was not a lot of parking space.... but enough for us.

Was it worth going back to the lake, absolutely. More to the point, the evening sun was in a lot better position for photographs, so a win in every way.

We climbed to the top of the best viewing position exchanged team photos with another couple and looked at this fantastic view of the brightly coloured lake set in a backdrop of mountains.

The Rockies at their best.

We then drove back to Banff collecting our \$10 money off token for food at the hotel bar, drank ale and scoffed our king sized bison burgers and fries (again!) before turning to bed exhausted.... but what a great day.

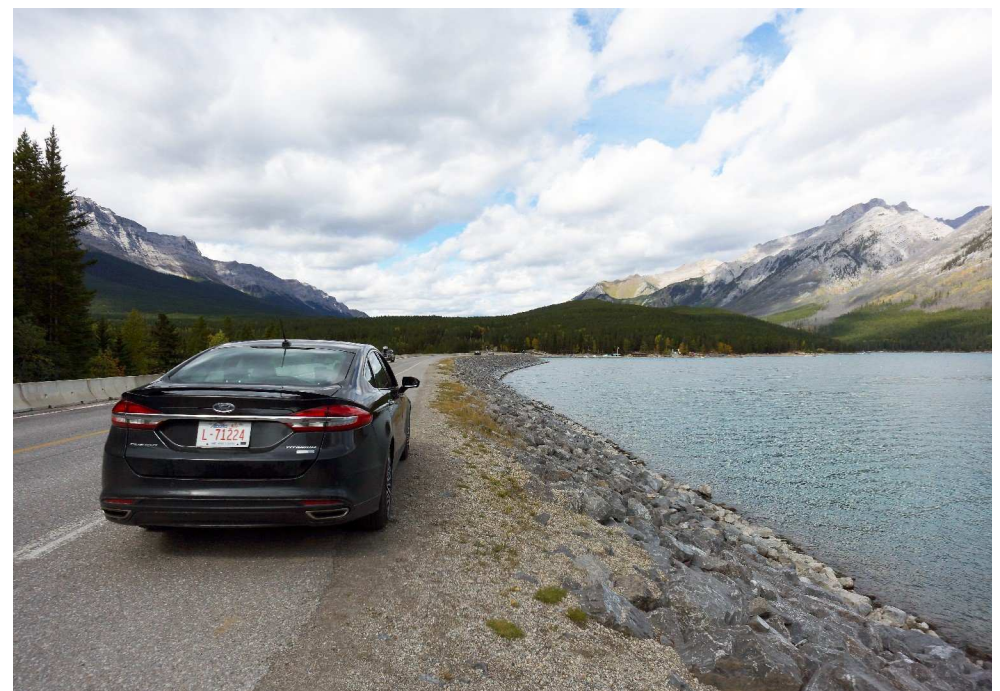
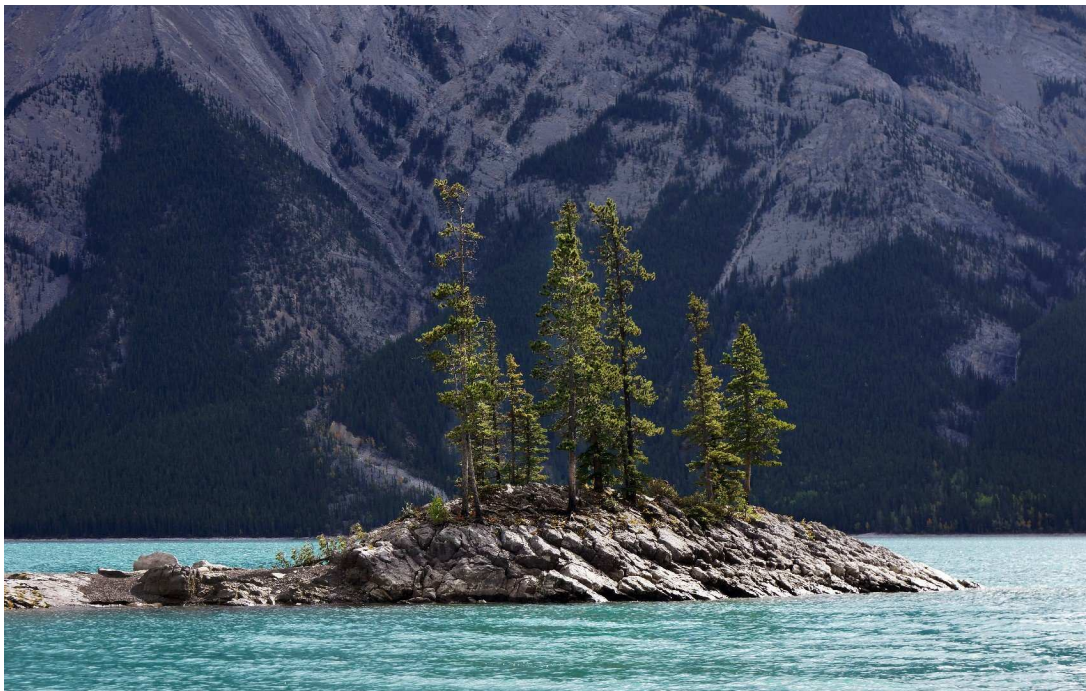






The great thing about Banff is a lot of the sites are close at hand and do not require long drives. We started off with the Lake Minnewanka scenic drive, followed by a two mile walk to a footbridge....boy was it windy.

Never mind, we stuck to it and were rewarded with pleasant if not exciting views.







After a quick trip up the Mount Norquay Scenic Drive, we headed for the area known as the Cave and Basin.

After touring the visitor centre and cave, we walked out looking for the Marsh Loop and boardwalk. On the way we came to a small museum commemorating the internees of the First World War, mostly Ukrainian.

After a walk along the Bow river we eventually found the marsh boardwalk. The area is fed from the hot springs in the cave which creates a unique eco system.

Our evening meal was at The Spaghetti Factory, which we thought was aptly named..... 'Factory'

That said it had been a varied and enjoyable day.















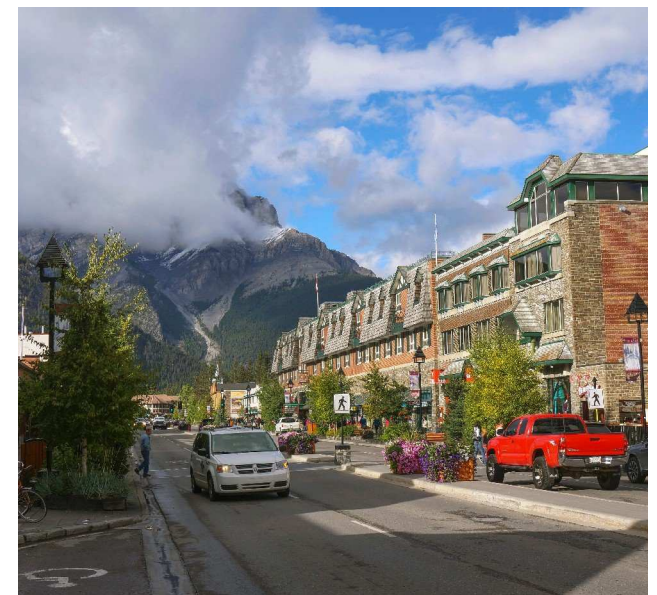
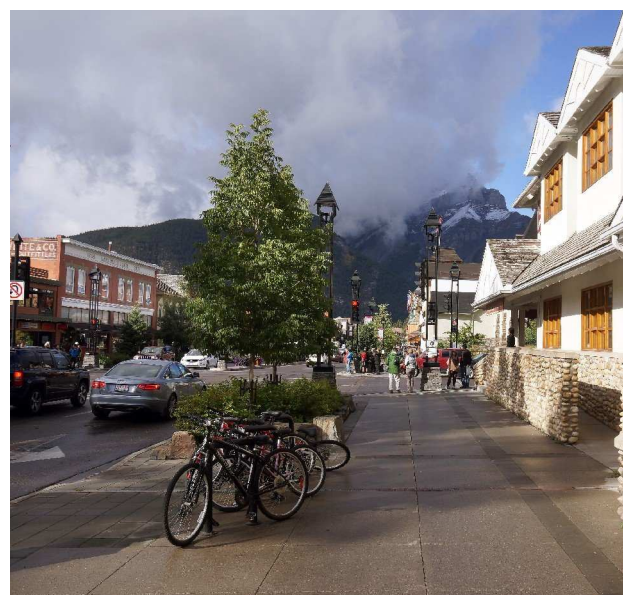
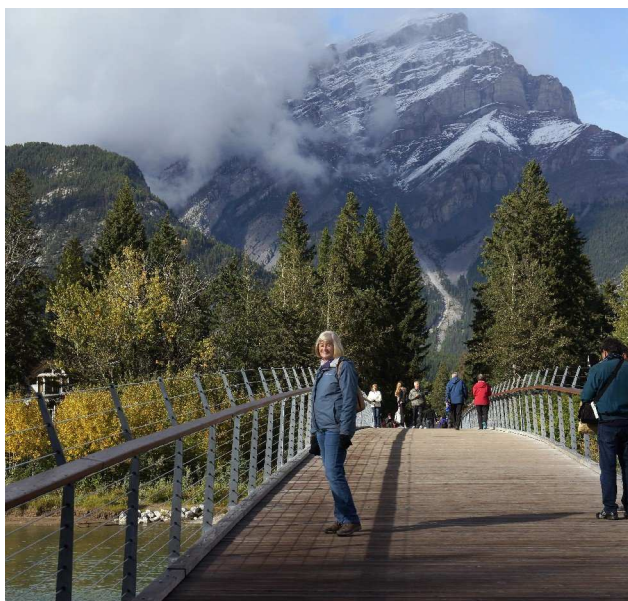




Sunday, a day of rest and we were ready to take a day off. By way of a change we had a breakfast of granola and fruit, (A now wears a towel bib to protect clothes and surrounding area.), J goes off to church. A goes to The Wild Flower café for cappuccino, muffin and a great conversation with a young Canadian couple.

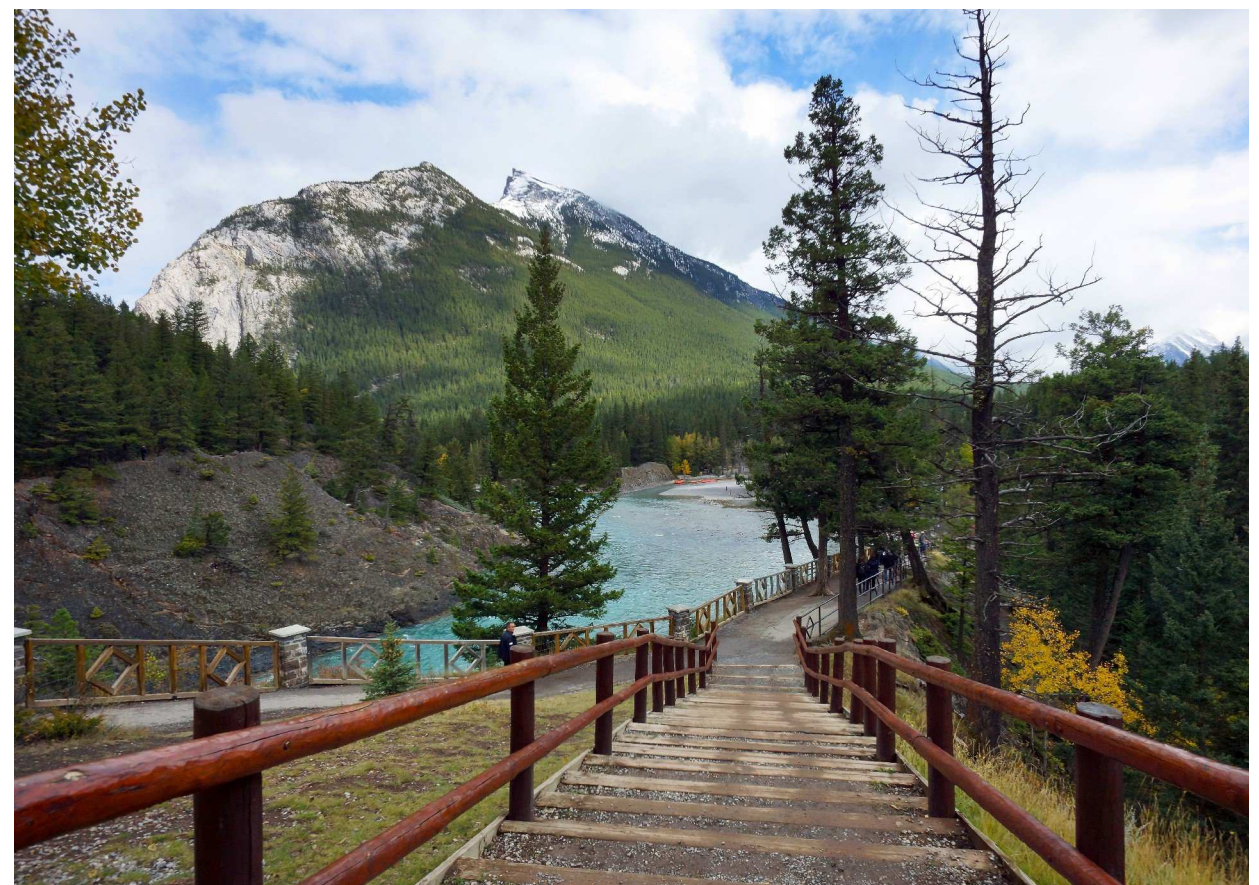
In the afternoon we visit the Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum, which was a little gem, apparently not changed a lot in the past 50 years. A's favourite photo was of two ladies, one was called 'Auntie Margaret Bad Boy'what a great name.

We then walked down to Bow Falls and back to town for a bit of light shopping in the tat shops. Before supper, we bought a bottle of wine to drink, which is probably why neither of us can remember where we ate.





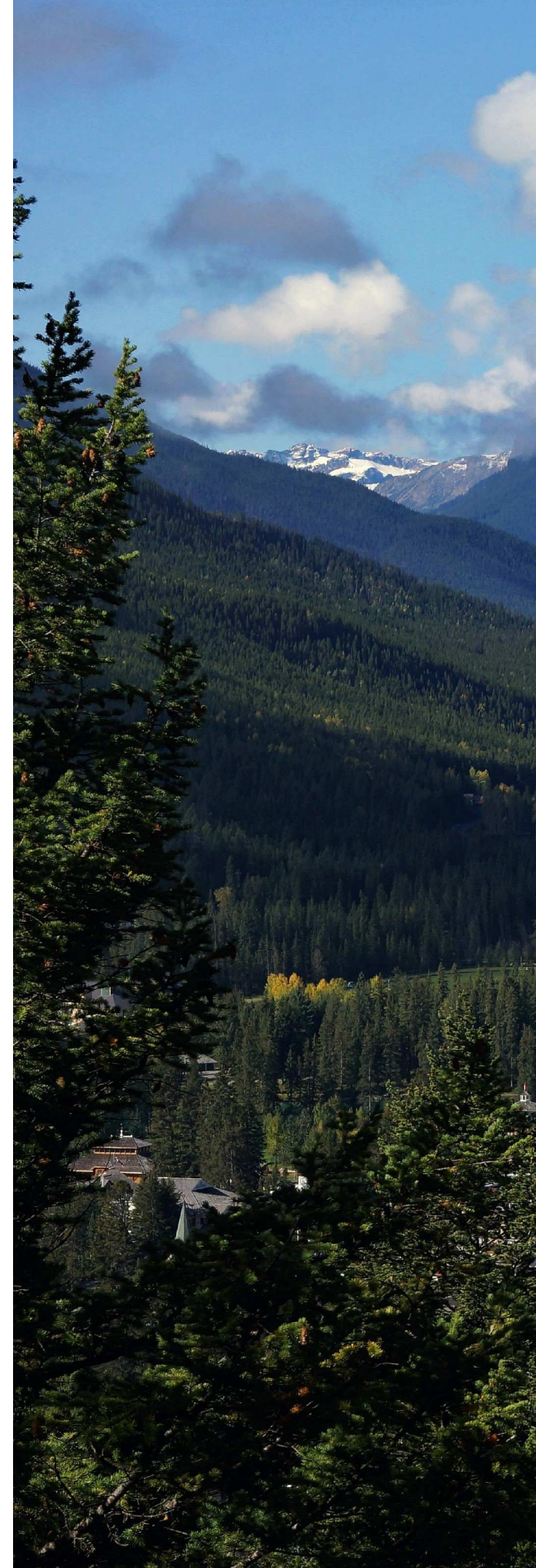






Our Last day in the Rockies. As a treat we had muffin and cappuccino in The Wild Flower café before taking the Tunnel Mountain Loop Road, which overlooks our hotel and Banff town, followed by distant views of Sulphur Mountain, the Bow River and the Hoodoos.

In the sun it all looked good, even if it was a little cold.











We had resisted going up in cable cars unless the weather was good, today it could not have been better.

By lunch time a lot of the mist had disappeared and we were all set to go up in The Banff Gondola to the top of Sulphur mountain.

Fantastic views with a half mile walk to an old weather station along a boardwalk, covered in snow in places.

A good end to a wonderful couple of weeks.

Tomorrow an early morning drive to Calgary Airport to drop off the car and fly to Salt Lake City for the next part of the journey.













