



## TOUR MONT BLANC – AUG. 28 – SEPT. 6



Mt. Blanc (4807m) is the highest mountain in the Alps, located on the French-Italian border.

Fourteen Chilliwack Outdoor Club members + three Dutchies (relatives of Case) did the loop counter-clockwise round the Alps, weaving through three different countries; France, Italy & Switzerland.

We all flew to Geneva & then on to Chamonix where we stayed for a few days to get over the worst of the jet lag. On the route there were variants and transport between most huts by bus or gondola. So every day we had to decide exactly which way we'd go and how we'd get there, all meeting at the same refuge at the end of the day. We had to hike in pouring rain, a blizzard, sweltering heat and strong winds. Some were purists, who wanted to do every step of the loop, others wanted to choose the more challenging options, and some were fine doing a few sections by bus or lifts. Others entered the hike with injuries and a few of us got a flu/cold while on the trek. Some of us completed all 155 km

(as per itinerary) and then some, while some of us chose not to or could not. In the end, we all agreed it was a most worthy adventure! Thanks so much Irene, for spearheading this trip and the others who pitched in with organizing it.

*Trek day 1, Aug. 28 – Les Houches to Auberge du Truc – direction: south*

Stats: 1380m gain / 650m loss / 14 km

It didn't just rain this day, it poured! So us five dutchies took the gondola up to 1800m, which cut off a big corner and more than half of the elevation gain. The others started from Les Houches. We all had to walk through a fenced in section that contained several big black steers with big bells on their necks. As one of them approached us, off in our corner, we anxiously darted out of his way. Thankfully he was more interested in the grass than in us.



The good thing about the rain was that when we crossed over the river on the long suspension bridge, the water was raging. The rain also brought a drastic drop in temperatures. It had been in the upper 30s the last few days and now it was in the mid 20s. At the Col de Tricot (2120m) it was very windy. It looked like there was a glass wall holding the clouds on the other side of the pass, the way they curled back in on





themselves. Most of the cols or passes had crosses which you could see from afar.

The hut was almost hidden in the mist. It was small and cute and warm. We all agreed that the lady running in was very friendly and their blueberry tarts were delicious! It was mostly just our group in this hut.

*Trek day 2, Aug. 29 – Auberge du Truc to Refuge de La Croix du Bonhomme – south*

Stats: 1350m gain / 640m loss / 16.8 km



This was the most challenging day, being caught in a blizzard. We started out by going downhill mostly on a gravel road, to the town of Les Contamines. A great place to go shopping. Lunches were not supplied at most of the huts. A few took the bus to the other end of the valley. There the climbing started on another narrow gravel road, much like our logging roads. We stopped in

at a picturesque chapel before the land became more forested. Notre Dame de la Gorge offered its best views from the ancient stone bridge. Soon we were in open farmlands where we stopped in a warm hut for lunch by Refuge de la Balme.

From there to the pass the weather changed. We got off course by a creek for a bit and then saw people coming down

so on we went. At the Bonhomme Pass it was very windy and the ground was now covered in snow. We put some layers on in a small wooden shelter there. The next stretch to the hut was very treacherous. Visibility kept shrinking on us and we were being pelted by tiny ice-balls. It was very slippery and my feet and hands were numb from the cold. What would normally take 20 minutes to walk, took us a very long hour. By 5:00pm, as we were beginning to lose daylight, we were extremely thankful to get to the large Bohomme hut at 2433m. But Case, Thea and Janet were still out there. The dutchies are flat-landers who rarely get snow. We were so worried. Would they turn back or still try cross that dangerous stretch? None of us had micro-spikes because Annemiek from the agency said we wouldn't need them.



A few young guys were listening to our animated conversation and offered to go out and look for them. It didn't make sense when Irene & Simon (who were behind us) showed up and said they hadn't seen them. And yet two other guys who came in before Irene & Simon and said they had. It turns out, Case, Thea & Janet had also taken a wrong turn. This was a good thing because who knows what would've happened to the two young women if they hadn't. When Case found them, they were panicking. One refused to move. Case told her she'd die if she didn't. He physically had to push her. In the meantime, Thea, Janet & the second girl carried on ahead, Thea relying on her google map on her cell phone. The phone just died as the guy from the hut found them. He helped them cross the creek that was close to the hut.





So, as we were sitting with fourteen of us at the table in the big hut, we were stunned to see Janet standing on the other side of the window. What a relief!!! As they entered the hut everyone was clapping and the whole story poured out. About 15 minutes later the last of them showed up. The girls thanked Case for “saving their lives”.

*Trek day 3, Aug. 30 – Refuge de La Croix du Bonhomme to Rifugio Elisabetta – southeast and then northeast*

Stats: 980m gain / 1230m loss / 19 km



What a different scene in the morning! The sun was out and you could see the neighbouring peaks. The calm after the storm. We descended for 5km to the hamlet of les Chapieux where we had a big fat omelet because we didn't get much breakfast at the hut.



From there it was uphill. The clouds just didn't want to lift enough to view the peaks. But once at col de la Seigne (2510m), voila! Sunshine and peaks! We were now passing from France into Italy.

In about an hour we arrived at Rifugio Elisabetta. What a beautiful view of the two peaks and glaciers just above the hut! The weather was getting better each day.



*Trek day 4, Aug. 31 – Rifugio Elisabetta to Rifugio Maison Vieille – northeast*

Stats: 360m gain / 570m loss / 9.5 km



This was a relaxing gorgeous sunny day, hiking past Mt. Blanc's southern face. The final stretch was through a larch forest and Italy's largest ski area, Via Lattea. We arrived at the hut at noon already. What a nice place! They had reclining lawn chairs and free showers that you could stay in as long as you wanted! And no line-ups! We had ample time for naps and happy hour. For dinner we got a delicious piece of pork. Until then, dinners were made mostly of egg, beans, pasta & cheese.





Day 5 was a rest day for seven of us.



We walked down to the second gondola, because they didn't open till 9:30am. Soon we were in Courmayeur where preparations were underway for the UltraTMB race. Seven of us went to the hotel to drop off our backpacks while the other ten carried on to the Bonatti hut, after taking the gondola to Helbronner to the Mt. Blanc Skywalk (3562m). We didn't get a full view of Mt. Blanc's summit till we stopped at the mid-point halfway down.

*Day 6, Sept. 2 – Hotel Triolet in Courmayeur to Gite Alpage de La Peule - northeast*

Stats for the seven of us who stayed in the hotel in Courmayeur: from where the 12-km bus ride ended it was: 767m gain / 6 km and for the ten who stayed in Rifugio Bonatti: 12 km / 1080m gain / 280m loss



This day the trail was very busy with many runners. We were on open slopes the whole day, making it easier to spot them. It was a steady steep uphill to the Grand Col Ferret (2537m). From there we were going into Switzerland. Some of our group took a higher route to the hut. We got there at 1:00pm, securing beds for the rest of the group.

*Day 7, Sept 3 – Gite Alpage de La Peule to Relais D'Arpette – north*

Stats: 680m gain / 1090m loss / 22.5 km



This was a full day. When we got to the village of La Fouly there were good views of Mt. Dolent, which is where the borders of all three countries meet. The rest of the trail was minimal in elevation changes. What made it more challenging was the length of it. As we got closer to Champex Lake at the end of the trail, we came to the quaint hamlet of Praz de Fort. Old hay barns with a few curved planks for balconies, rose above the houses with their red geraniums in the planter boxes by the windows. After crossing the road, we climbed up to the large lake. It felt so good to soak our tired feet in the cold water. From there it wasn't that far through the forest to our hut.

*Day 8, Sept. 4 – Relais d'Arpette to Auberge Mont Blanc – west*

Stats: 980m gain / 1340m loss / 12.7 km



This was labeled as the toughest day because it involved climbing boulders up a steep slope. But for us COCers, it wasn't anything we hadn't done before. The Fenetre





Another sunny day. We were now making sure we left early, in order to beat the heat. The Col de La Balme offered the best views of Mt. Blanc and it had a café. It was busy there, since many people take the gondolas up.

d'Arpette was the highest point on the entire route, at 2700m. From there we had clear views of the Trent Glacier. It was a very steep and long downhill. The lower we got, the hotter it got. So it was a very welcome sight when we got to the café at the base of the slope. The cold drinks were sooo good.



We were now entering France once again and the valley of gondolas in which Chamonix is located. We hiked down to the second gondola which got us quite close to our hut. It was a smaller hut but the food was the best.



*Day 10, Sept. 6 – Gite Le Moulin to Chamonix / Les Houches - southwest*

Stats: 1280m gain / 600m loss / 13km

It wasn't much farther to the Mt. Blanc hut, the largest one yet. Dinner took too long, with only three people serving 100. Between dinner and dessert, it took 1.5 hours. We all headed for bed after that.



*Day 9, Sept. 5 – Auberge Mont Blanc to Gite Le Moulin – southwest*

Stats: 1090m gain / 1020m loss / 14.6 km



This day was not for those afraid of heights. The steel ladders went straight up solid rock and cables helped climb narrow ledges. All the while, the views of Mt. Blanc across the valley were amazing. We continued upwards at the high rock cairn junction, to Lac Blanc. Wet from the sweat, the bar/café was more than welcome. Again, there were many people who came up by gondola. The small lakes reflected the mountain's image in their turquoise water. This was the end. We were done. What a trek! From there we walked about an hour down to the gondola by Refuge de La Flegere which took us into Chamonix.





Eight of us continued our adventure in Italy for another two weeks of sightseeing and tours.

Along for this TMB trek were: Christine C, Nadine B, Denise D, Brigitte G, Charlotte H, Anne O'L, Lisa S & Patrick, Thea R, Case & **Joce T** (report & photos), Judith & Janet (Case's sisters), Allana W, Cindy W, Simon & **Irene H**

\*For a more detailed account of this trip, check out my blog: <https://www.withmytwofeet.com/post/tour-de-mt-blanc-10-day-trek>

## SAN JUAN BIKE AND HIKE - SEPT 11-13



The team Left to Right: Miriam S., Karen P., Karen P., Gary B., Leora P., Annette W., Sheryl H., (Photo taken by Len S.)

This report has two parts: Part A "The Pre-ambule, the route and plan"\* written by Gary B. and Part B "A participants perspective" crafted by Miriam Soet.

The Pre-ambule:\* Sheryl H. ( my wife) and I have done multi-day cycle tours on the San Juan Islands for over 30 yrs and 20 yrs respectively; They are our 'GO TO" riding destination. In all these years we have never based our rides from San Juan Island. Lopez Is. has always been our 'hub' and we ventured to the other islands from there as the ferry

schedules permitted travel to the other islands, to and from, on a morning/evening schedule. We looked at using San Juan as a base but were deterred by a lack of camping, affordable motel accommodation and ferry schedules.

When we went to San Juan, we usually rode the entire perimeter of the island (approx. 80km) which didn't leave much time to really explore some of the historic sites or take in some of the hiking opportunities. To better experience the island needed at least two days.

So, on Day # 1 of this trip, the plan was to focus on exploring the southern and eastern end of the island and on Day # 2- do the northern and western regions. Day # 3 was to be a flex day to perhaps ride one of the other islands on the way back to Anacortes.

We decided to take a mid-morning ferry to the island (the earlier crossings were just TOO early). As planned on Day # 1 we headed south, stopped to explore the new American Camp National Park Information Center and then rode through the park grounds hoping to see one of elusive Red Foxes (we did see one at a considerable distance). Leaving the park we then did the 5km Jakes Lagoon Hike that led us to a shoreline lagoon, through a high canopied forest and up onto a high ridge overlook a shoreline meadow with a broad view of the Salish Sea, the Olympia Peninsula Mtns., and Whidbey Is. On the return ride to Friday Harbour, we took a less direct route riding around Mud (or False Bay). Total riding distance: 32km. For dinner we joined the locals at the local Brewery for suds and grub. It was a good day.

Day # 2 we focused on the western/northern areas of the island riding 52 km stopping at points of interest along the way (see Miriam's comments that follow). Another leisurely paced day.

As for day three we explored stopping at Lopez Island and doing a ride to visit one or more (there are three) wonderful shoreline parks on the island. This would have been a longer day on the bikes, but as things turned out there was no Lopez ferry from Friday Harbour due to a staff shortage and we elected to go directly to Anacortes and then do a ride around Geumes Island.

By **Gary B**

Miriam's impression:

A group of 7 relatively unconnected COC members met (most for the first time) at the Anacortes Ferry for a cycle trip on the American San Juan Islands. Under Gary Baker's fantastic leadership, we had 3 days of very varied experiences! We enjoyed beautiful parks and spectacular island views, windswept bluffs, Arbutus trees, walking along secluded beach trails, visiting historic sites, riding along back roads full of quirky decorative displays, riding up and down hills galore, and even listening to a naturalist talk. Of course, to top it all off we had some delicious meals and developed a great camaraderie during our time together.

We started our adventure in Friday Harbour. Booking difficulties resulted in part of the group staying at the Orca Bay Inn (in Town) and the rest at the Lakedale Lodge (8 km away) but it was not a problem. Our first stop was at the

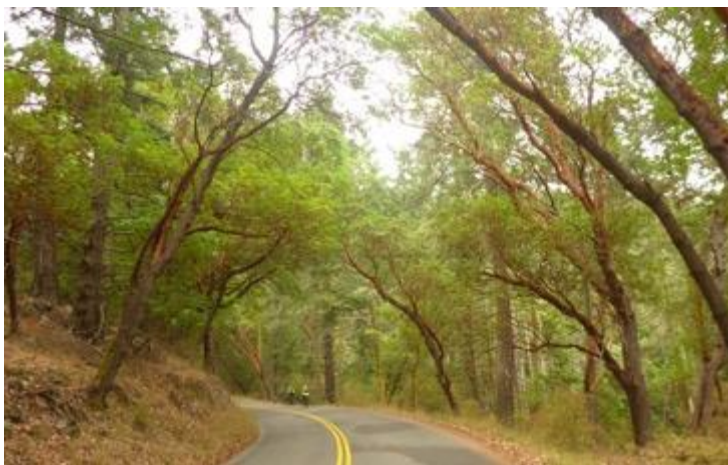


American Camp Visitor Center, where we learned all about the "Pig War" of the 1860's and even got to sit on a pig!



We then rode to the island's south end alongside beautiful bluffs above the ocean. At the southern tip of the island, we walked a 5km trail with views of the Cattle Point Lighthouse. On returning to Friday Harbour, we all went to the 'San Juan Island Brewery' for a great pub dinner!

The weather forecast for our second day was 90% chance of rain, but thanks to the weather gods we got lucky!! We awoke to clouds and just some very light sprinkles which progressively improved throughout the day ending in a sunny afternoon. As we set out to the north end of the island, we were overtaken by a large, organized group of "Backroads Cyclists" who were mostly on ebikes so we didn't feel too bad.



Our first stop was a Lavender Farm with a great little store, but one of the advantages of being on a bike is that lack of space curbs the temptation to buy anything! Then it was onto Lime Kiln Park, famous for its 'whale watching' viewpoint. If only we had been there about 24 hours earlier, the Naturalist

told us there had been a group of about 25 Orcas going through the strait the previous day. In any case the Naturalist's great talk, the picturesque lighthouse and overall spectacular water views made the stop very worthwhile even without whale sightings.



The next stop was at a Mausoleum!! This memorial to the McMillin Family was an architectural surprise in the middle of the forest, a classically built memorial full of interesting and symbolic structural elements. We treated ourselves to a decadent lunch at Roche Harbor's long established and ritzy Hotel de Haro. Four group members all had the 'Chop, Chop Asian noodle salad', which we can highly recommend. It was a steep ride back up to the main road on a full stomach. The late afternoon sun highlighted the beauty of the rural landscape dotted with farms and vineyards as we wound our way back to our respective accommodations.

Beautiful sunshine on our third morning was a great start to the day. Unfortunately, my leisurely outdoor morning coffee resulted in a wasp sting. By the time we cycled to the ferry my finger was so swollen it looked like my ring would have to be cut off. The combination of ice, elevation and Gary coming to the rescue with Benadryl brought the swelling down enough that I didn't have to sacrifice the finger or the ring! We returned to Anacortes where we caught another ferry over to Guemes Island, this was just a 10-minute ferry ride. The backroads here were extremely quiet, in fact signs were posted that the roads are shared with horses! We enjoyed seeing all the crazy decorated mailboxes and quirky sculptural displays in the local's gardens...everything from helicopters to yellow submarines!! We stopped at the Guemes Island Resort where we resorted to island time to eat lunch, chat and enjoy the beach views. At the end of the day's ride we all gorged ourselves with the "FREE" plums on offer at the General Store while we waited for our return ferry. On the drive home, we made a last stop for an authentic Mexican dinner at Senor Lopez restaurant in Bellingham. It was a great trip thanks to our knowledgeable



leader Gary and the friendliness and sociability of the group. Thank you for leading this trip, Gary!

P.S. Len enjoys taking and then producing photo albums. To see his photo 'log' of this trip here is the link:

<https://na01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Flensoet.smugmug.com%2F2023%2F2023-09-11-San-Juan-Island-Cycling&data=05%7C01%7C%7C7ee76e6d3c6b43794e1708dbc4fecce2%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C638320370874123938%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ikk1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=9V0OfHkMfrxS4nH9EMHuzfS5bID2UaceuKSmrLeQ4sQ%3D&reserved=0>

## Mt JARVIS – SEPT. 16



Darcy Grainger and Owen Williams (yours truly) bush-wacked to the summit of Mount Jarvis. Mt Jarvis is a prominent peak on the south side of the Coquihala Highway about 15 kms from Hope. Darcy invited all members of the COC, but for a reason that I only now understand, all other members declined.

Mount Jarvis, like 67 geographical features in the Fraser Valley area, was named after those locals killed in action in WWII. Mount Jarvis was named after Flight Lieutenant Terrance Jarvis; who was killed in July 1944 when his Spitfire crashed in France.

Darcy, a nephew of Flight Officer Francis Grainger (the namesake of Grainger Peak), has an ambition to climb upon all 67 features named after those killed in action. Unfortunately for me, Darcy has now climbed 40 peaks - and only challenging peaks remain – such as Mount Jarvis.

We accessed Mt Jarvis by driving up the Peers Creek FSR to the HBC Brigade Trail trailhead. Sadly for us, there was no Mt. Jarvis trailhead. Above the road there was an impassible bluff. At that point I could see that Darcy's dream of honouring Lt. Jarvis was serious.

For the next 6 hours we climbed countless bluffs, scrambled over countless windfalls, and followed countless game trails in the wrong direction. The suffering was endless. I had to continuously remind myself, that we were suffering to honour another who suffered.



At the top, glorious views opened up in all directions. To the east Coquihala Peak (and others peaks near Coquihala Pass), to the south Mt Outram and others, to the west Hope Mtn, and to the northwest Old Settler. Additionally, we could see many other peaks named after those killed in action (Jorgenson, Snider, MacLeod, Wells, and Eaton). Above us were graceful hawks diving and twisting in the sky – much like Lt. Jarvis would have done in his Spitfire.

Will I climb peak 41 with Darcy? Maybe on Remembrance Day.

10 hours CtoC (6 hours up, 4 hours down) / Vertical – 1400 metres / Logs crossed – 10,000

By **Darcy Grainger & Owen Williams**

## FLAT IRON – SEPT. 22



As the Coquihalla highway makes a turn northward near Shylock Road, hiking adventurers turn their eyes skyward to witness the 25 km by 15 km Needle Peak Pluton, a 48million years old mountainous area with distinctive, steep granite rock slopes. High on the southern side of the valley sits Flat Iron, our destination on this sunny Friday. Heading up were Lorenz, Frank, Adriana and Isayo, and myself. No bugs, just a beautiful dry trail and the beginning of the fall colours of both mountain ash and blueberry bushes. We made our way up to Flat Iron Lake, and were greeted by Yak, Nak, and all the other animal named peaks in the area. It was an especially clear day, and the group got to learn some Portugese from Adrianna and Isayo, both students visiting from Brazil, doing their doctorates. It was fun scrambling up the rocks towards Flat Iron after the lake, making for a





moderate outing with great company. Thanks to all who came to make this day great!

By **Susan Federspiel**

## **WEST KOOTENAY BIKE BACKING LOOP: SEPT; 25-27**



The riders were: Lori Y., Carol A., Dave S., Peter E., Bob Koen (a guest), and me.

This event was full of surprises, it definitely didn't unfold as planned. I did this ride last year (the same week) with Bob K. and his friend Bob Lee. The weather was fabulous. This year not so much! The weather was so unsettled it was questionable whether we should do the ride.

The plan was to start our ride from Christina Lake (C.L.). The first day we would ride the Western Columbia (Rail to Trail) route of the TCT from there to Castlegar with approximately 85km of gravel and 10km of pavement. This was to be the longest day, but with a 2% average grade going up for 40km and 40km of 2% going down it was to be a relatively easy day.

Day # 2. From Castlegar we would follow the TCT to Trail; approximately 38km of mixed trail along the eastern shoreline of the Columbia River. This included 8km of very narrow, very sandy single track on a steep embankment. The day would finish with a 10km steep climb (700+m) up an old wagon road from Trail to Rossland. The final day would see us ride approximately 60km starting with a 15km climb of approx. 300m, then a 15km decent of approx. 725m, followed by a 15 km CLIMB of 900+m, and finishing with a 15km decent of 1110m back to Christina Lake. The first 30km and the last 15km were on excellent gravel roads. The big climb was on the old Boundary-Rossland Highway, long since abandoned and no longer maintained.

At first we intended this to be a self-supported ride, full on bike packing, carrying all our camping gear. Discussions ensued and a group decision was made to lighten our load by eating breakfast and dinners at local restaurants/cafes. A good call.

I had considered 'sagging' this ride, with riders sharing driving. But the nature of the route was such that there were no intermediate meeting points. Whomever drove on a particular day would have to completely miss riding that day. Then Lori who with her husband, Dan, were visiting their son and family near Nelson says, "Dan is prepared to provide 'sag'.". I had trouble containing my excitement, this changed everything. We would now be riding light, carrying just water, snack/lunch, and any additional clothing we deemed necessary.

So how did it go? The weather forecasts leading up to the ride dates varied from sort of OK to awful. Erring on the hopeful side, and hearing no strong voices to cancel, off we went. To me it's like magic when group participants coming from different locations all arrive as planned, ready to go.

The ride started with a short, but steep, climb (on pavement) up to the rail grade as it had already begun the long climb above the village over the mountain pass to Castlegar. Once on the gravel surface of the old railway bed comments were flying as to which bike/tire combinations would prove to be the best. We were only a few kilometers along the trail when we encountered a surprise, a barrier and signs saying the trail was closed/blocked 7km ahead...Sh...!! We decided to go on and investigate, more barriers and signs, heavy equipment and construction workers. Passage was impossible! We had to backtrack and sacrifice 150m of hard-earned elevation gain and ride a steep descent back down to Hwy #3 to continue on. To get back onto the TCT we had to ride 15km UP the highway then 3.5km on the Old Paulson Rd. detour to re-access the Rail Trail. The rail trail was a steady 2% grade the highway was often climbing at 7+% and short sections of the detour were over 15%. This was not part of the plan, but you do what you have to do! Bob (a fellow Randonneur) and I have climbed this highway numerous times; it's not only the grade that can get to you, it is the highway NOISE! Cars passing at highway speeds (100kph) and loaded semis crawling up steep grades are all working hard. At one point Bob and I were asked if we wear ear plugs when we do our long highway rides....absolutely NOT. We want ALL our protective senses



at full function for safety reasons, it can be dangerous out there. Thankfully this section of Highway has wide paved shoulders. In the end we climbed an additional 250-300m to work our way back to the rail trail. This is almost equivalent to having climbing over the summit of the Blueberry-Paulson highway. Back on the rail trail we stopped at all the interpretive signs detailing the history (engineering, political, and religious (Doukhobors) along the route. We arrived at the summit shelter, our planned lunch stop, about 2 hours later than planned. There we met two hunters camping with their trailer and side-by-side ATV. They were elk hunting. The fire ban had been lifted two days earlier and they had a pile of firewood to last a very long time.



From the summit we had the long (42km) effortless descent down to Castlegar, riding through, and learning the history of the 1km long Bulldog Tunnel. We rode through some short tunnels and over several spectacular steel trestles. The challenges encountered earlier were so worth it, now. There was another surprise as we approached Castlegar. In the distance we saw a cyclist riding in the same direction, rather odd. If he had been riding from C.L. to Castlegar we would have surely seen him much sooner. My curiosity got the better of me and I went into 'chase mode'. To my surprise it was Dan. He had ridden 35km westerly on the trail hoping to meet up with us. At that point, thinking something had delayed us, changed our plans, he turned back to Castlegar. He and I slowed and the 7 of us rode into Castlegar together. Another surprise, the forecast for the day was for rain showers, the rain held off all day.

In Castlegar we camped at the Pass Creek Regional Park. What a gem, enhanced by pizza and beer! It was early to bed. We all, and me in particular were about to have another surprise. It started to POUR and my tent leaked like a

sieve.... the water was dripping on my head and along the full length of my sleeping bag...Sh....! I abandoned my tent for shelter in one of the covered picnic structures.

On awakening the rain had stopped. As my tent was useless, I asked Peter if I could bunk in with him in his dry 4-person tent. Yes. Leaving the park on the ride to a restaurant for breakfast it started to rain. We were in no hurry as this was, in theory, a short day of riding. Wonderful, during breakfast it stopped raining. The route began with good pavement, then broken pavement onto an old abandoned wagon road that went to some long ago abandon homesteads. This was easy going for all of us until we had to ride the sandy, single-track trail along the riverbank. This is where MB riding skills really came into play. Four riders (Peter, Carol, Dave, and Bob) all avid MB'ers quickly left Lori and me behind. Lori and I walked much of this sandy single-rack portion of the trail. As the trail often descended down along the riverbank and the sun was breaking through soaking up some sunshine perched on a log or two watching the world, figuratively flowing by, was wonderful.



Peter really enjoyed riding this sandy stretch of trail. He was totally surprised at how well his Homer Hilsen steel touring bike handled the rocky, sandy, and rough gravel surfaces encountered on this section of trail. Almost more fun than it would have been on his mountain bike, he said. I'll take his word for, but with his MB skills he left the rest of us in his dust. The only upgrade he had made to his bike for this ride was installing wider tires, a combination semi slick, minimalist knobby tires (44mm wide I think). Of all the bike/tire combinations used on this ride, I would have considered his bike to be the least competent. What do I know? Riding skill trumps.

No sooner had we reached the outskirts of Trail (and pavement) than the skies opened up, but fortunately this downpour was very short lived. Before stopping for a break at





a conveniently located A&W we rode over to see and ride across a one-of-a-kind bike/pedestrian bridge over the Columbia River (Columbia River Skywalk - City of Trail: Google it). Between the bridge and the A&W I made a short detour to a flower shop (more about this later). Dan was waiting patiently at the A&W where we had a strategy meeting as how to tackle the ride UP to Rossland. It seemed everyone had more or less had enough trail riding and there was little enthusiasm for riding this 10km, 700m climb on an old wagon Rd up to Rossland. A plan was hatched. The weather was threatening and although we had booked space at the Municipal campground, it was unanimous, let's get a motel. Dan and two riders (Lori and Carol) were to drive up and book rooms for all of us. In the past I had taken a bus, with my bike up to Rossland, 2 riders would do the same, or so we thought. Would you believe that the standard transit bike racks would not accommodate gravel bikes, that are essentially beefed up road/hybrid bikes. Unbelievable, this was another surprise! Bob and I had both ridden up the highway from Trail to Rossland and decided we'd just ride up. Dan would return to pick up Peter and Dave (they could have done it..... 😊).

This climb has special meaning for me...oh the flowers. In 1970 I was involved in a cycling accident with my very best friend in Stanley Park. Sadly he died of his head injuries. This was before the days of helmets. Michael, my friend, who grew up in Rossland, is interned at the Rossland/Trail Cemetery located part way up the highway between the two cities. Whenever I go by, I stop to pay my respect and wonder what he might have achieved (he was 25 yrs old).  
.....Wear a Helmet.....

As I was relentlessly pedalling up the hill my phone rang., it was Carol to tell me that they had booked us all into the Prestige Hotel, another surprise as this is the best hotel in Rossland (likely for Trail as well). Did that bring back memories from another time I rode up that hill on an event I abandoned in Rossland. Now that is one super, friendly cyclist hotel. It was great! From there it was only a short walk to the local brewery bistro with food like a 4-star restaurant. Again early to bed as we had the biggest most challenging day in the ride ahead of us.

In the morning it was a rush to look out the hotel window, to check the weather....light rain, heavy fog and 3C. With hiking

in the mountain and a strong storm or blizzard blows in one hunkers down or retreats. If kayaking and a gale force wind blows up, you stay put. With 60km of isolated road, climbing over two passes with temperatures, likely, near or below zero and the possibility of blizzard conditions the decision was, let's go home". The ride was over. We had a leisurely breakfast and figured out how to get everyone back to Christina Lake, to retrieve the vehicles. Dan and Lori with Bob, Dave and I drove to C.L. Lori and Dan headed home from there. Bob drove back to Rossland, picked up his bike and headed home to Kaslo. Dave and I drove our vehicles back to Rossland to pick up Carol and Peter, respectively. The two passes we crossed between C.L. and Rossland are both lower than the two passes we would ridden over had we gone on. There was mixed rain and snow as we drove over both on the return trip to Rossland. Not riding on was the best, safest call!



FYI: There was one full suspension M.B. (the fattest tires, one cross country style MB and three Gravel Bikes, one with the equivalent of fat touring semi slick tires with side knobs, one with 48mm semi knobbies and one with fattish MB style tires). All worked well and at the pace we were riding any limitations or benefits of their design made no significant difference to riding performance.

All in all, the two full days of riding were fun, easy at times and definitely challenging at times as well. Let's plan to do something like it again next year. I have some ideas.

By **Gary B**

Masthead of Mt. Blanc by Joce T



# CLUB INFORMATION

## Notice to Trip Participants

It is understood that risk is inherent to some degree in all outdoor activities. Please ensure that you understand the risks involved and are prepared to accept them. As a participant, you are responsible for your own safety and equipment at all times. Trip organizers are not professional guides—they are simply club members who have volunteered their time for your enjoyment.

Inform the trip organizer of any medical conditions that he or she should be aware of in an emergency, for example: diabetes, asthma, and bee sting reactions. Ensure that your previous experience, ability and fitness level are adequate for the trip. Be sure that your equipment and clothing are adequate for the trip. Stay with the group. Wait for other group members frequently and at all route junctions. Tell the trip organizer if you must turn back. **Be safe and enjoy!**

## Required Equipment

Trip organizers will be pleased to answer any questions regarding the required equipment for any outing. For more information, it is recommended that you visit one of the many websites that provide such information. Some recommended sites are: [www.valhallapure.com](http://www.valhallapure.com) (club sponsor), [www.backpacker.com](http://www.backpacker.com) and [www.mec.ca](http://www.mec.ca).

**Safety first, last, and always!** It is the responsibility of trip participants to be equipped appropriately. Plan for the **worst!**

## The Ten Essentials

Before you hit any trail, no matter how easy, no matter how short, no matter how close to home, make sure your backpack is loaded with the ten essentials. When in the backcountry you are responsible for your own safety, and any one of these ten items may help to save your life. Carry them all and know how to use them.

1. Map
2. Compass
3. Extra clothing
4. Sunglasses and sunscreen
5. Headlamp/flashlight
6. First-aid supplies
7. Fire starter
8. Matches
9. Knife
10. Extra food and water

## Equipment for Club Members' Use

2 Shovels	2 ice axes
2 pairs of crampons	2 avalanche probes
2 avalanche transceivers	
2 pairs of snowshoes	
	contact Cal Francis to use: <a href="mailto:calfrancis@gmail.com">calfrancis@gmail.com</a>

**Note:** All equipment must be returned in the same condition as borrowed or repaired appropriately. The equipment is being examined to determine its state of repair and will be reviewed by the Board of Directors as to what should be retained, scrapped or sold.

## Hike Grading System

Duration (hrs.)		Elevation Gain (m)		Difficulty	
A	0-4	1	10-500	a	Easy
B	4-7	2	500-1000	b	Moderate
C	7-10	3	1000-1500	c	Difficult
D	10+	4	1500+	d	Advanced

## CLUB CONTACTS

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For trips and announcements to be forwarded to all		
Note: also you can post in members: Facebook: Chilliwack Outdoor Club Group		
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