

Have Goose, Will Travel

Cou Sheer

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It all began last Spring, Mama's attendance at the National was required. She decided, in her infinite wisdom, that I was the "chosen" Briard to accompany her and Papa. We would go on holiday and then on to the festivities: evaluation, herding(?), and the shows.

My travel crate was fully decorated with my picture, name and microchip number. My bag was packed with my Canadian goose (how appropriate), Booda bear and Nylabone. Mama watched me being loaded and showed the crew the beautiful BCA color brochure, so they would know what a special passenger they had on board. We landed in Seattle and returned 3 ½ weeks and 4500 miles later from

San Francisco. (What a surprise to the rental car company.)



The authoress Cou Sheer getting ready for the trip through the Canadian Rockies with traveling companion.

Immediately heading North to Canada, we were visited by a lovely family who wanted to meet a Briard- from daughter, age 8, to Grandmama. They were favorably impressed. The next day was one of the best for me: a hike up to Bridal Falls, BC, watching for bears and the wonderful Briard-friendly Minter Gardens. Mama said that it is one of the few formal gardens that are open to canine visitors. Of course, I was dressed in my white scrunches and ASBC kerchief. We took a picture, but Papa does not stack well and it is blurred.

I will enumerate just a few of the highlights of my trip.

The Black Bear phenomena

This started during my evening run-about at the Lake Louise Inn in Alberta. I was doing my merry circles and behold the chef and the whole kitchen staff lined up across the road gaping at me. Finally, one of them was brave enough to approach us and inquire as to what type of black bear I was. The black bear is a natural inhabitant of that community and even though they may have the same shiny black coat, they do not have the correct ear-set for a Briard (see bear picture from the US Dept. of Agr. Brochure). Indeed, their head proportions are generally incorrect and they need to go on a diet.



Black Bear, frequently confused with Black Briard.
(USDA brochure)

The last episode in the numerous attempts to associate me with them occurred on Idaho Rt 12- the Lewis & Clark Trail, Northwest Passage Scenic Byway. It is a gorgeous road traversing winding valleys and running adjacent to the beautiful Clearwater and Lochsa Rivers. The illuminated fir (not fur) on the mountainsides in their autumn colors is fantastic. I diverge. We were picnicking along side the river when a passing car came to a screeching halt on the road. The people backed up into the picnic area and again inquired as to my species. Wow- that one could have caused a real accident.

The Columbia Icefield

One of the most phenomenal areas we passed was the eastern edge of the Columbia Icefield, the largest subpolar icefield on the continent. This is the Athabasca Glacier, one of five fed by the icefield. Once again I was mistaken for a bear and they would not allow me to join Mama on the SnoCoach, so we did not walk on the glacier. (see picture) It was snowing that day and you can see the outline of us in the photograph. It was one of those days that Papa did not take any other outside pictures, as I was the only illuminated fur in camera range. Nearby, huge crows toddled about the parking lots at the foot of Crowfoot Glacier, waiting for tourist food. We eyed one another cautiously.



Hidden Pictures. Can you find the Glacier? Can you find Lana? Can you find a Black Bear? Can you find Cou?

Animal Bridges

Between Lake Louise and Banff, the Trans-Canada Highway is spanned by two bridges especially built for the wildlife in the area. The highway is completely bounded by deer-fencing and the animal bridges are 50 foot wide structures with deer-fencing on each side that permit the furry creatures to cross the highway safely. (see picture) We did not see anyone doing so that day, nor did we see any of the large wild creatures until almost the end of our trip at the Dean Creek Elk viewing area in Oregon.



A view of an “animal bridge” seen through the eyes of Cou Sheer.

Our normal day included unexpected construction zones with half hour waiting lines, intrepid cyclists in the frigid weather, heavenly passing lanes, omnipresent fog or rain, railroads and trains hanging off the sides of the cliffs, and in the evening, ubiquitous Chinese restaurants and high vapor pressure Dungeness crabs (disappeared as Papa walked in the door). In the US, the drive-through espresso shops were a boon to humanity. Sign posting for the roads was plentiful: Slides, Rocks, Stock (NASDAQ or NYSE), Elk, Free Range (vs. Pay-for Range?). The Elk signs were beautiful 2-dimensional silhouette structures often with lights that would flicker if in fact there were really elk in the area. The Shasta-Trinity (California) area had “Safety Zones”. These proclaimed that car lights must be on, double fines for traffic violations and NO Accidents are permitted. Is the corollary to this is that in all other areas Accidents are allowed and perhaps encouraged?

Glacier Park

This was one of our sunniest days (see picture) and we traveled the Going To The Sun highway in the westbound direction, which means we didn't topple off. At the midpoint of this exciting trail through the mountains, passed glaciers, aqua colored streams with striated multi-colored boulders and deep blue lakes, we expectantly came upon the Logan Pass Restaurant which was already "Closed for the Season". In fact, the Park Rangers were removing the flagpoles for the coming of winter and erecting 15-foot high posts at the road edge to find it during plowing next spring. This year the Road opened up on June 27. We did not wait for the fun/snow to begin but traveled further west and joined two Chows and their family for a picnic at Lake McDonald.



Ever the photographer, Cou takes a picture of illuminated "fur" (sp) in the Canadian Rockies.

Fisherman's Wharf

This is an extra special place to camp out under the sidewalk seafood bar tables and share sourdough bread with Mama while Papa dines on Crab. Lot's of oo's and ah's from passersby. I wore red scrunches and my Rass kerchief that day.

Dog friendly lodgings

Just a warning- this may mean smoking rooms without air-conditioning and this does not mean that there is a designated dog-walking area. In fact, three establishments had NO grass at all and were adjacent to high traffic roadways. What a bummer! The lovely inn in San Francisco provided us with directions to the Presidio. Voted the best dog walking area by me. At every "spot", it has views of the Golden Gate Bridge.

Parting comments

Our best acronym for the trip was in the casino-laden area when we passed a bus labeled Tahoe Area Rapid Transit- "TART".

In summary, we traveled through the Selkirk and Rocky Mountain ranges in Canada, Waterton-Glacier Park, Columbia River Valley, the Oregon Coast and Northern California. The abundance of glaciers and glacial streams (uniquely aqua in color containing white silt), waterfalls and lakes were overwhelming in the mountainous areas. The rocky coastline with its barking sea lions (sound just like my big brother, Sailor) and the huge redwoods just made one phenomenal day after another.

It was a Briard-supreme holiday!