

# Report about the Zinke Study Tour to Parks in Canada

26 July – 26 August 2007

**Objectives:** Visit and study the infrastructure and management policy of parks and tourist facilities in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. Compare with and learn for possible application in similar European areas.

Update from previous visits in the 1980s and 1990s (i.e. interpret changes in site management) and to get to know some other sites (e.g. on mining).

**Methodology:** Car travel, hiking in parks, camping on state/provincial campgrounds, interviews and collection of information (incl. photographic documentation).

## Itinerary

Thu 26 July: Flight Vienna - Toronto

Sat 28 July – 2 Aug. Visit of the following sites in southern Ontario:

*Ontario Place*: old urban family leisure park with water rides and envir. protect. progr.

*Toronto attractions ROM & CN Tower* (tourist hot spot: 554 m tall, > 2 m visitors)

*Wasaga Beach Prov. Pk*: Longest (14 km) freshwater beach worldwide and sand dunes on Georgian Bay of lake Huron; *Blue Flag* designation for water & environment standards

*Niagara Falls*: Top tourist attraction and nature site with > 8 m visitors; transport systems (shuttle bus, boats, elevators), top souvenir/shopping/catering/lodging systems

Fri 3 Aug.: Flight to Vancouver (car rental until 25 Aug.)

Sat 4 Aug. – Mon 6 Aug. Visit of the city tourist sites, i.a.:

*Stanley Park*: 80 of 250 ha of forest damaged by big windfall of Dec. 2006 -> restoration

*Qu. Elizabeth Pk*: former stone quarries turned into top botanical garden, 6 m visitors!

*Spanish Banks*: natural sandy beach carefully developed for city people)

*Lynn Canyon Park*: rocky rift canyon with coastal temp. rain forest; suspension bridge

*New Westminster Quay Park*: renewed Fraser river front with history & nature info boards

Tue 7 Aug. – Fri 24 Aug: Round trip to parks in British Columbia and Alberta:

*Manning Prov. Pk*: 709 km<sup>2</sup> transition from coastal to dry forest, sub-alpine meadows

*Okanagan Lake - Fintry Prov. Pk*: heritage farm of Scottish settlers on dryland

*Glacier NP*: visitor centre, visitor management.(50% DE, 10% US, NL, UK, CAN, Asian)

*Yoho NP*: Emerald L., Takakkaw falls & walk-in campsite, spiral tunnels, bighorn sheep

*Banff NP*: since 1885! Hot spots L. Louise & Moraine L., parking & zoning systems

*Icefield parkway*: since 1940; 230 km of WHS, 0.5 m visitors; 7 icefields, floodplains

*Jasper NP*: waterfalls, Maligne canyon & L. (22 km; famous boat trip), Medicine L.

*Mt. Robson Prov. Pk*: 3954 m, since 1913, Kinney L. trail, source of 1280 km Fraser R.

*North Thompson River Prov. Park*: Indian archaeological sites on the river front

*Lillooet Indian reserve*: 8,000 years old; salmon/sturgeon fishing, jade mining; gold rush

*Whistler-Blackcomb*: Young winter & summer resort; co-site of the winter Olympics 2010  
*Britannia Beach mine*: natl. historic mill (copper concentrator) – once one of largest mines in the British Empire and heavy metal polluter in N. America; museum with education and visitor programmes; since 2005 pollution remediation with new WTP to treat ARD  
*Sunshine Coast - Porpoise Bay Prov. Park*: beach on brackish water of Sechelt inlet  
*Telegraph Cove*: northern Vancouver island coast and whale-watching programmes; competent trip guiding with biologist; whale interpretative centre  
*MacMillan/Cathedral Grove Prov. Park*: unique >800 yr Douglas fir old-growth rain forest  
*Victoria*: Royal BC Museum, harbour ferry tours  
*French Beach Prov. Park*: south. Vanc. island coast: pebble beach & tidal rock pools.

Sat 25 Aug. Return flight Vancouver-Vienna.

## Some Study Trip Results

The study tour allowed visiting very diverse sites, from heavily visited nature attractions up to remote wilderness areas. Access also varied a lot (by car, on foot, by boat, elevators) as much as the type of visitor paths (undeveloped, fenced or paved trails, boat, viewing platforms etc.).

During the trip, various visiting and interpretation tools were used: self-guiding signs and boards, local guides, audio tours, brochures and maps, etc., all indicating how perfectly visitors are being serviced in Canada in order to assure best experience and understanding.

A number of personal interviews were made with park managers, campground wardens, museum guides, visitor information and hotel staff, local people and tourists.

Environmental education is prominent everywhere in Canada, very well accepted and applied by domestic and international visitors. This has a tradition of decades and became part of the Canadian identity, in spite of the huge masses of waste that are produced everyday (take-out catering!). All resting and parking areas have garbage cans that are regularly (often daily) emptied. (unless the service staff is on strike, as this time in Vancouver). Any litter is removed at least once a day in any visited site.

Road and travel information and signage is very well developed and gives easy directions for cars (to parking, attractions, services – gas, food, lodging). At key spots (major road intersections, cities, tourist centres, ferries) information desks and offices provide any tourist service – for free (colour brochures as well as personal advice where to go and what to do).

Nature information and interpretation is a clear asset of most parks, visitors can hardly “escape” from receiving some interesting facts: The excellent visitor centres are highly frequented, complemented by various information boards at all parking lots, trails and campgrounds, advertising scenic spots and interpretative programmes. National Parks charge a *daily fee*; Provincial Parks are free to visit (sometimes fees are due for parking).

Campgrounds: The - high - quality of the sites remained largely the same (campsites are dispersed over a large, mostly woody and little disturbed nature area and include a solid table with benches, fireplace and an even ground to set up tents and trailers), surprisingly some campgrounds are subject to noise from trucks and trains. Firewood is not anymore free of charge and more difficult to receive. The fee collection is still done by self-registration with self-payment or via collection by a warden. Most of the attractive campgrounds can be reserved in advance by phone (no complicate system, needed on peak days): see [www.discovercamping.ca](http://www.discovercamping.ca) and <http://gocampingbc.com/ParkFinder.html>. In 2006, over 68,000

people made reservations in 78 BC parks (68% of reservations were made through the website and 32% via the call centre).

Sanitation: All visited parks are equipped with toilets (pit or flushing), nearly all of them were very clean (sprayed every week against smell). Some parks even offer warm showers.

Bears are a permanent and often visibly health risk. Therefore, advisory how to behave (notably how to prevent encounters) are prominent everywhere (folders, written reminders in campground facilities, signs etc.). In addition, park rangers give practical information and instructions at highly visited nature attractions.

Safety: This issue gained much higher concern and is very prominent today. It is certainly also caused by court cases against parks. Written and oral instructions by guides are clear and explicit; every visitor listens and makes sure to behave correctly.

Managing visitor congestions: Highly renowned places are often subject to mass visits. Park managers have developed tools to cope with this in various ways while *assuring that the visitors won't be disappointed* (whether a fee is paid or the visit is free of charge): Line ups are frequent but take often no longer than 10-20 minutes, any longer waiting time is pre-announced and reliable. Rock walls, fences, pavements and signing/strict guiding ensure that the nature sites are not damaged (even after decades!). Visitor capacities can cope also with high numbers. Damaged sites may be closed and subject to restoration works (seen in many parks, often with explanatory signs); alternative routes maintain visitor satisfaction. Over the last 20 years, especially BC has much extended its parks system and traffic infrastructure, thus enlarging its capacities and maintaining **high nature tourist satisfaction**.

**Facts about BC**: BC has a population of 4.3 million, with 2.2 million living in Metro Vancouver and 0.8 million in Victoria; most people live in the south close to the US border. The province is 950,000 km<sup>2</sup> large (larger than France and Germany combined!). 600,000 km<sup>2</sup> is forested (with 43% ranked as "old growth"; 83 % is coniferous), only 2% of B.C. has been permanently converted to agriculture or urban areas. BC has today 13 million ha (= 13.8 %!) of protected areas in 893 parks (from 1 ha to 990,000 ha; since 2001 >100 new parks were opened); they offer 7000 km of hiking trails and 340 campground with >11,000 campsites that had in 2006 ca. 19 million visits incl. 2.3 million camping visits. 90% of British Columbians have used a provincial park at some time; and, about 60% of BC residents use a provincial park each year. Tourism contributes some \$9.9 billion (€ 6.9 b) to the provincial economy (no. 2 after forestry).

B.C. is Canada's most ecologically diverse province. It is characterised by 14 biogeoclimatic zones, each distinct in terms of climate, soil and vegetation. B.C. has an estimated 20% of the world's remaining coastal temperate rainforests (7.6 million ha – about the size of Ireland). The valleys of south-central B.C. are the hottest and driest in Canada; its pocket desert (northern end of the US-Mexican Sonoran desert) hosts also rattlesnakes.

## Useful Links

BC Parks: office <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/main/prgs/divisions.htm> <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/index.html>

Lynn Canyon Park: <http://www.lynncanyonparkguide.bc.ca/>

Manning Prov. Park: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/manning.html>

Fintry Prov. Park: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/fintry.html>

Glacier NP: [http://www.pc.gc.ca/pn-np/bc/glacier/index\\_E.asp](http://www.pc.gc.ca/pn-np/bc/glacier/index_E.asp)

Yoho NP: [http://www.pc.gc.ca/pn-np/bc/yoho/index\\_E.asp](http://www.pc.gc.ca/pn-np/bc/yoho/index_E.asp)

Banff NP: [http://www.pc.gc.ca/pn-np/ab/banff/index\\_E.asp](http://www.pc.gc.ca/pn-np/ab/banff/index_E.asp)

Jasper NP: [http://www.pc.gc.ca/pn-np/ab/jasper/index\\_E.asp](http://www.pc.gc.ca/pn-np/ab/jasper/index_E.asp)

Mt. Robson Prov. Pk: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/mtrobson.html>  
N. Thompson Prov. Pk Clearwater: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/nthomp.html>  
Lillooet: <http://www.lillooetbc.com/visiting.php>  
Whistler: <http://www.whistlerblackcomb.com/index.htm>  
Porpoise Bay Prov. Pk: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/porpoise.html>  
Cathedral Grove: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/macmillan.html>  
French Beach Prov. Pk: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/french.html>

Stanley Park – restoration: <http://vancouver.ca/parks/parks/stanley/restoration/index.htm>  
Queen Elizabeth park: <http://vancouver.ca/parks/parks/queenelizabeth/index.htm>  
Ontario Place: <http://www.ontarioplace.com/en/about/history.html>  
Toronto museums and CN Tower: <http://www.rom.on.ca/index.php> <http://www.cntower.com/>  
Wasaga Beach Prov. Pk: <http://www.ontarioparks.com/english/wasa.html> [www.wasagabeachpark.com](http://www.wasagabeachpark.com)  
Niagara Falls <http://www.niagaraparks.com/>

**Whale watching** <http://www.stubbs-island.com/> lot of info, e.g. on marine mammals; first whale watching company since 1980 with strong ethics and commitment to conservation

**Quote from Sightings Log - August 20 2007** (sum of 3 trips)

**Orca sighted:** A12's & 3 transients. **Behaviour observed:** Transients - long dives, no vocals. A12's - resting, traveling lines, foraging.

**Humpback whales sighted:** 2 in total.

**Wildlife sighted:** 2 Minke whales, 3 Dall's porpoises, 40 harbour seals, 10+ Pacific white-sided dolphins, and 18 Steller sea lions. Birds sighted today included: rhinoceros auklets, common murrelets, bald eagles, belted kingfishers, pelagic cormorants, and Northern phalaropes.

**From the Wheelhouse:** "Well another whale of a day! We saw breaching humpback whales, transients engaged in hunting behaviour, bow and wake riding Dall's porpoises, Steller sea lions hauled out on rocks, and great looks at the resident orca. It was just another one of those days where you had to be there to experience the excitement." - Captain Wayne

**Quote of the day:** "The wise don't expect to find life worth living - they make it that way."

**Mining** at Britannia Beach: <http://www.bcmuseumofmining.org/> <http://theconcentrator.ca/>  
<http://www.epcor.ca/Communities/BCPNW/Operations/WaterandWastewater/britanniamine/>

Camping gear: <http://www.bcpassport.com/vancouver-shopping/outdoor-gear-equipment.aspx>

Tourism Thompson-Okanagan region: <http://www.totabc.com/>

Barkerville: <http://www.barkerville.ca/newindex/index03.html>

Vanc. Island – north: <http://www.vancouverisland.travel/north-island/>

Vanc. Island – south: <http://www.vancouverisland.travel/south-island/>

Butchart Gardens: <http://www.butchartgardens.com/index.php?viewPage=TRUE>

Weather: [http://www.weatheroffice.gc.ca/canada\\_e.html](http://www.weatheroffice.gc.ca/canada_e.html)

Watershed Watch Salmon Society: **Craig Orr**, 604-809-2799 <http://www.watershed-watch.org/>

**Office of the Wet'suwet'en** PHONE 250-877-5090; Ste.#1, 205 Beaver Rd, Moricetown, BC V0J 2N1

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