

Subj: **Brian & Gertrude Invade Canada**

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Hi all -

Just thought I'd give you a quick update on my latest fling with Gertrude. If you have "real" things to do, feel free to delete this right away - won't hurt my feelings.

I took off Sunday, with the plan to head just north of the border, then head east, coming back down into Idaho or western Montana. Only made it to Mount Vernon when I saw one of those pretty new Indian Royal Enfield 500s for sale, pretty bikes!



Went through the city of Hope, so now I'm really beyond hope. Spent the first night in Princeton BC, a nice little gold rush town along the Skagit river, which is as pretty up here as in Washington (didn't see any crawdad action though):



Had a fairly long ride on Monday headed up hwy 97, deciding to go north instead of east, ending up in Prince George, among a few rain drops. Prince George is called the northern capital of Canada, and is quite modern with about 80,000 inhabitants. Sophisticated enough to have a Starbucks, where I ran into two other BMW riders who had plenty of time to BS - one a retired professional from Vancouver, the other a local electrical engineering professor. My guess is that our discussion wouldn't have been typical for Harley riders. Must get cold up here, at the hotel (only \$55/night Canadian!) there were outlets next to each parking spot.

On the way to Prince George, I passed the largest (I forget, could be the second largest) copper mine in the world. Past the mine, the mining residue (including some water) was being spread over a huge expanse of land, giving a very impressive sight. Evidently it will be covered with dirt at some point in the future since it creates a huge amount of dust during the summer (it looks like a lake, but most of it isn't covered with water - I thought it might be salt flats when I first saw it):



I ran into a bicyclist riding his mountain bike through the area. I was really impressed by his bike. Weights 26 lbs with (get this) 4" of suspension travel front and rear. And check out the cool little disk brakes front and rear. They are even hydraulic, although no reservoirs are to be seen (or maybe even present):



Today, I headed north again, going through the mountains, passing through Dawson Creek (wasn't that in a movie or soap opera or something?), and back south east to Grande Prairie Alberta, where I am tonight. I don't know which way I'll head tomorrow. Since its been cold and partly rainy, I'll probably head south to try to find some better weather. I have to say though, the electric vest and grips feel awfully good on days like this, although tomorrow I'll probably put on both pairs of jeans for a little more warmth, and hope it doesn't rain a lot so I don't get them both wet at the same time.

About 75 miles south of Prince George, there started to be moose crossing signs:



General Canada observations:

- I like how they have \$1 and \$2 coins in general circulation. Makes more sense to me than dollar bills.

- I also like how the Canadians were astute enough to switch over to the metric system. How embarrassing it is to the US that we wouldn't/couldn't.

- Not many Japanese cars up here in the north - mostly American cars and trucks - if there was one typical rig, it would be a filthy pickup with a fuel tank in the back:



I think cars get so dirty up here from all the trucks getting dirt and mud on the highways. Gertrude isn't as clean and lovely as she once was either!

- Towns here like to name themselves. I've been through the "Country Music Capital of Canada" (Merritt), "Mile 0 of the Alaskan Highway" (Dawson Creek), "Chainsaw Sculpture Capital of Canada" (Chetwynd) and the "City of Flowing Wells" (Demmitt as I recall).

It strikes me how close we are to Canada, yet few take the time to visit all the beautiful scenery and isolated spots. I love being away from all the traffic of the Seattle area.

See you later, eh?

Brian/Dad