

[VERSION 4]

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING

*Travelling by train in Canada
and elsewhere in North America*

2020's



by Peter Dawes
[SANDRA DAWES]

**No Matter Where It's Going:
Travelling by train in Canada and elsewhere in North America
2020's**

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ISBN 978-1-77295-101-1.

FRONT COVER PHOTO

2020's-1: Author waiting on the Watrous SK concrete "slab" as VIA's Toronto-Vancouver No. 1 *Canadian* slows for a request stop, GMD F40PH-3's 6457 and 6456 heading 19 cars (pardon the grumpy face!) (2022/05/10) [SANDRA DAWES].

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DEDICATION

to Sandra Dawes.

FOREWORD

This project documents my extensive train travels over the years in most parts of Canada served by rail, and to a much lesser extent in the United States, Mexico and Costa Rica.

This volume covers the 2020's. Involved, so far, have been trips by VIA Rail on the *Canadian* over various segments between Edmonton, Vancouver and Toronto, also in the Ontario-Québec Corridor; on Amtrak's *California Zephyr*, *Coast Starlight* and *Lakeshore Limited*, plus trains in the Northeast Corridor; and on Alberta, Québec and Saskatchewan tourist trains. (Please note that, during 2020 and 2021, I took no train trips other than local Light Rail Transit, due to Covid 19.)

Please note that this is **VERSION 4** of this volume (for changes from the previous version, please see page 195).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

PETER DAWES worked as a transportation policy researcher, analyst, project manager and advisor for the Canadian Transport Commission and Government of Alberta until taking early retirement. He has had a lifelong personal and professional interest in railways and passenger trains, and resides with his wife Sandra in Edmonton, Alberta.

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PHOTO CREDITS

Dawes, Sandra [2020's-1-2,6,8,10,14-23,25-28,31-32,33-35,37-40,42-45,48-49,52,54,56,58-66,69-73,74,75,76,78,79,80,81,82];

Unknown photographers [2020's-9,11,13,67];

Dawes, Peter [all others].

IMPORTANT!

Please see **GENERAL NOTES AND CAVEATS** below for important information regarding copyright, ownership, use and acquisition of photos appearing in this document (specifically under **Photographs**, page 9).

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 10th volume of my North American rail-travel project, offering detailed accounts of all train trips taken during the 2020's.

Previous volumes cover the 1950's, the 1960's, first part of the 1970's (1970-75), second part of that decade (1976-79), first part of the 1980's (1980-82), second part of that decade (1983-89), 1990's, 2000's and 2010's. There is also a comprehensive "Reprise" providing: a review of rail-passenger developments by decade; an overall summary of my travels; personal ratings of trains; interesting cars and locomotives encountered; and several tables providing more detailed trip information. (I've also prepared three "Companion Documents": No. 1, Trip Details; No. 2, Train Details; and No. 3, Equipment Details.)

Please note that I've also travelled extensively by train in Europe and, to a much lesser extent, Australia, Fiji, India and Sri Lanka, Japan and Hong Kong – the subject of a separate project called *La Grande Allure: Travelling by train in Europe and elsewhere Overseas*.

The **2020's**, through **2025**, have accounted for 6% of my North American trips over the years, compared to (in descending order): 1970's, 33%; 1980's, 21%; 2000's, 12%; 2010's, 12%; 1960's, 7%; 1990's, 6%; and 1950's, 3%.

It is important to note that I only started taking train consists at the beginning of 1974. Prior to this, trips are reconstructed from memory and are therefore speculative, with timings and car types taken from public timetables and equipment lists.

BEFORE PROCEEDING...

Those familiar with other volumes might wish to skip over the rest of this section.

Turning to the current volume, I provide **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** of those persons without whose assistance this project could not have happened. To assist readers as they go through the year-by-year accounts, I also offer some **GENERAL NOTES & CAVEATS**, **ABBREVIATIONS**, a **SAMPLE ENTRY**, and a **QUICK INDEX OF TRAINS TAKEN**.

For the **period** involved, I provide the overall context, details of trips taken, places visited, and particularly noteworthy trips. For each **year** within that period, I include a **SYNOPSIS** covering: the context; trips taken and distance travelled; types and numbers of cars and locomotives making up the trains; places visited; noteworthy train trips; fastest and slowest average speeds; and any memorable associated trips by other modes of transport.

Then, under the heading **TRIPS AND CONSISTS** and for each train trip, I provide the date and (in a headline) service provider, train number, embarkation point, disembarkation point, origin and final destination (if different), and train name (where applicable). I go on to show the detailed train consist in a darkly shaded box, followed by departure time, arrival time, any major enroute stops, and purpose of the trip. (If more than one leg was involved, I mention the ultimate destination and connecting points at the start of the first leg.) I then describe any interesting aspects about the train and route taken, and things that happened along the way. I also provide a brief account of any relevant events that occurred before the train departed or after it arrived at my destination.

At the end of the entry (lightly shaded), I often provide the distance in both kilometres and miles, elapsed time and average speed, as well as further details on the train itself, including configuration and history of selected cars and locomotives. Unless circumstances dictate otherwise, I do this only for the first trip, during that year and over that route, of a certain train or type of train.

Now for an important explanation. I fully reference every point-to-point, inter-community **rail** trip taken, including excursions on both regular lines and preserved railways – also commuter rail trips provided they went beyond the city or region concerned. I note, but do not fully reference, associated marine, road and air trips, as well as intra-community trips by main-line railways.

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At the end of the volume, I provide a **GENERAL INDEX** by subject, **BIBLIOGRAPHY**, **LIST OF PHOTOS**, **LIST OF SCANNED IMAGES**, and note describing **CHANGES FROM PREVIOUS VERSION**.

Three final points. First, please bear in mind that this is a **personal** account of rail and associated travel. It will appeal mainly to people who already enjoy train travel or might want to try it out; to railway modellers, photographers, historians or researchers; and perhaps to those who are just interested in the evolution of rail travel in Canada and (to a much lesser degree) the United States during this era. While trip purpose, references to travelling companions, and anecdotes are included, I present this information in such a manner as to be easily avoided by those looking strictly for train consists.

Second, more knowledgeable readers will find many comments and explanations to be old hat and obvious. If you fit this bill, please understand that you will be a lot more familiar with this subject area than others.

Third, I strongly encourage feedback – everything from factual clarifications to minor typographical corrections; to additional car and locomotive information; and to photographs that might fill in gaps (or, where my efforts are concerned, improve on what I've included). Please contact me using the information shown on page 2 above.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to the following:

- the late Mark Bunting, Tom Matoff, Ken Mozersky, John Stilgoe, the late Brian Sullivan, and Greg Thompson for being key influences where both my interest in trains and career in transportation are concerned (as cited in the initial 1950's volume);
- Ken Boulton, Tom Clark, Greg Gormick, Ken Holmes, the late Fred Matthews, Doug Smith and Nicholas Vincent for being kindred spirits;

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- Ken Boulton, the late Jennifer Bunting, Cindy Chow, Colin Churcher, Charlie Dawes, the late Patrick Dorin, Don McQueen, Jean Patenaude, the late Earl Roberts, Doug Smith, Dan Walter and the late Dale Wilson for providing valuable advice concerning this project;
- Shaun Fawcett for essential help in publishing these volumes online; and
- my wife Sandra for much-appreciated companionship on many trips, for design suggestions, and for developing the route schematics, website and web versions of these documents.

Despite the assistance provided, the author remains entirely responsible for errors or omissions.

Finally, this volume is dedicated to Sandra, who has been my travelling companion and photographic better going back to 1982.

Peter Dawes
Edmonton, Alberta
January, 2026.

GENERAL NOTES AND CAVEATS

Photographs: have been chosen to support the text, ***remain the property of the individual photographer and/or collection, are protected by copyright, and must not be used in any fashion without permission*** (please bear in mind that those involving night and winter trains often were taken in adverse lighting conditions);

Train names: are shown where formally used (and as used) by the service provider (in the case of Ontario-Québec Corridor trains, they continue to be shown after VIA dropped them from its new pocket timetable format in 1998);

BEFORE PROCEEDING...

Those familiar with other volumes might wish to skip over the rest of this section.

Timings: are shown in standard or daylight savings time, whichever was in effect;

Travel by non-rail means: is highlighted by a bullet, either on its own if it occurred at the start of a journey on a non-rail travel day, otherwise within the normal text;

Car occupied: is indicated in **Bold**;

Diesel locomotives: are referred to as "Diesel" instead of the more technically correct "Diesel-Electric";

Snack facilities: are not usually indicated but were often available (in the Ontario-Québec Corridor, by cart in Coaches);

Equipment units: are shown in several categories, examples being "Coaches & Daynitors" and "Sleeping & Business Cars" (please note that not all car types mentioned under these category titles were necessarily encountered in every decade or period);

Equipment deadheading: is indicated by *[dd]*;

Cars used for other than designed purposes: are noted as such where recorded or assumed (e.g., a Club Galley being used as a Coach carries the notation, *[as Coach]*);

Major stops: refers to full revenue stops and omits Flag or Conditional stops except where these are of special interest;

Distances and average speeds: are rounded to the nearest full kilometre or mile (distances may vary from timetables especially where conversion back and forth between the two measures was necessary and where the service provider used a different ratio; also, average speeds reflect the scarcity of dedicated, high-speed passenger trackage in North America, as well as the often considerable time required for operational, servicing, passenger access, express handling, and crewing purposes);

Equipment details: are provided for selected cars and locomotives only, in order to give the flavour, in each year, of equipment encountered (special thanks here to the Bytown Railway Society for its *Canadian*

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Trackside Guide, Earl Roberts and Dave Stremes, editors);

Consist-taking: has resulted in some inaccuracies and omissions, due to: switching of equipment prior to my joining or leaving a train (or during the middle of the night); mistakes made in recording equipment types; late boarding or hurried exit from trains; and occasional grumpiness or sheer laziness – in which case assumptions are made regarding the particular car or locomotive (or number of units), based in some cases on photos taken at the time, and shown in *Italics*.

ABBREVIATIONS

SERVICE PROVIDERS

[Note: coloured abbreviations carry through from earlier volumes]

AM Amtrak (National Railroad Passenger Corp.)

APRE Alberta Prairie Rail Excursions

RC Réseau Charlevoix (Train de Charlevoix)

VIA VIA Rail Canada

WR Wheatland Rail

ADDITIONAL TRACK AND EQUIPMENT OWNERS

ACF American Car & Foundry

AM Amtrak (National Railroad Passenger Corp.)

BLW Baldwin Locomotive Works

B&M Boston & Maine Railroad

CCS Cape Cod Scenic Railroad

C&EI Chicago & Eastern Illinois

CN Canadian National Railways

CP Canadian Pacific Railway

CR Consolidated Rail Corp. (Conrail)

CWR Central Western Railway (Stettler AB)

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DB	Deutsche Bundesbahn/Deutsche Bahn
FUR	First Union Rail
HF	H. Fraser
JLC&E	Jonesboro, Lake City & Eastern Railroad
L&N	Louisville & Nashville
MBTA	Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
MRL	Mississippian Railway (Fulton MS)
NARC	North Alabama Railroad Club
NRHMI	National Railroad Historical Society, Michigan Chapter (Bluewater)
NRHS	National Railroad Historical Society
NS	Norfolk Southern Railway
N&W	Norfolk & Western Railway
NYC	New York Central Railroad
PC	Penn Central Railroad
RSC	Rail/Sea Cruises
SAL	Seaboard Air Line Railroad
SCL	Seaboard Coast Line Railroad
SG	Seminole Gulf Railroad
SLSF	St. Louis-San Francisco Railroad
SOU	Southern Railway
SP	Southern Pacific Railroad
T&NO	Texas & New Orleans Railroad
UP	Union Pacific Railroad

RAIL EQUIPMENT

Bfr	Car acting as buffer
C	Coach
CabC	Cab-Coach
CfL	Cafe Lounge
CfeLC	Cafe Lounge Coach
CL	Café Lounge
CX	Baggage Coach

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D	Diner
dd	Equipment deadheading
Dn	Dinette (Lunch Counter)
E	Engine (Diesel)
ex-	Formerly
HEP	Head-end Electric Power
K	Club Galley
KDn	Club Dinette
L	Lounge car
LS	Lounge Sleeper
lr-	Later
MS	Messenger car
NPCU	Non-Powered Control Unit
OBS	Open observation car
OLS	Observation Lounge Sleeper
PC	Power Car
S	Sleeper
U	Generator
X	Baggage
XY	Baggage Dormitory

SLEEPING ACCOMMODATIONS

ct	Compartment
db	Double Bedroom
de	Deluxe room
di	Room accessible to mobility device users (Deluxe on VIA)
dr	Drawing Room
du	Duplex Roomette
rm	Roomette
sc	Section

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EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURERS

ALS	Alstom
AMFT	AMF Technotransport
ARI	Avalon Rail Inc.
Budd	Budd Co.
CAF	Construcciones y Auxiliar de Ferrocarriles USA
CCF	Canadian Car & Foundry
DWU	Düewag & Waggon Union
EMD	Electro-Motive Division (GM)
GE	General Electric
GMD	General Motors Diesel Division
JRS	Julien-Rail-Solutions
MKA	Morrison Knudsen/Amerail
MC	Metropolitan-Cammell
PS	Pullman Standard
SMS	Siemens Mobility
SPTA	SEPTA Rail

SAMPLE ENTRY

BEFORE PROCEEDING...

Those familiar with other volumes might wish to skip over this section.

10-11 MAY:

VIA 1 [TORONTO] WATROUS-EDMONTON [VANCOUVER] Canadian

E	[2]	6457,6456
X		8601
C	[2]	8120,8110
CfeL		8503
D		Princess
CfeL		8506

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S	[7]	Hearne Manor, Bell Manor, Dawson Manor, Hunter Manor, Wolfe Manor, Brant Manor, Amherst Manor
CfL		8505
D		Acadian
S	[3]	Franklin Manor, Château Lauzon, Château Salaberry
OLS		Prince Albert Park

To **EDMONTON**, departing 1405 and arriving 0015 (scheduled for 0754 and 2050, respectively), including stops at Saskatoon and Wainwright AB, behind two General Motors F40PH-3's (home by taxi); * I occupied a Lower Berth in a MANOR car; * 619 km in 10 hrs 10 mins, or 61 km/h (386 mls/38 mph); * Nos. 6456, 6457 (GMD, 1989); * Nos. 8110 (ex-110), 8505 (ex-CP CfLC 505, VIA 505), 8601 (ex-CP XY 3001, CP, VIA 601), HEARNE MANOR (3sc4rm5db1ct), PRINCESS (all Budd/AMFT, 1954-5; ex-CP); CHÂTEAU LAUZON (6de), LAURENTIDE PARK (1de1di) (Budd/AMFT/ARI/JRS, 1954-5; ex-CP); * Similar or same consist only observed on No. 2 at Edmonton on 14 JUN had 8516, not 8506, as second CfL.

Explanations:

10-11 MAY:

VIA 1

[TORONTO] WATROUS-EDMONTON

[VANCOUVER]

Canadian

E [2] 6457,6456

X 8601

C [2] 8120,8110

CfL 8503

D Princess

CfL 8506

- departure and arrival dates;
- service provider was VIA, train number 1;
- segment travelled, train originating Toronto and terminating Vancouver);
- name of train;
- two locomotives travelling over the entire route (Diesel-electric by default);
- Baggage car likewise over the entire route;
- these two Coaches likewise;
- this Café Lounge likewise;
- this Dining car likewise;
- this Café Lounge likewise;

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S [7] **Hearne Manor**, Bell Manor

- these seven Sleeping cars likewise (**Bold** indicating car; occupied;

Dawson Manor, Hunter Manor

Wolfe Manor, Brant Manor

Amherst Manor

CfL 8506

- this Café Lounge likewise;

D Acadian

- this Dining car likewise;

S [3] Franklin Manor, Château Lauzon

- these three Sleeping cars likewise;

Château Salaberry

OLS Prince Albert Park

- this Observation Lounge Sleeper likewise.

* 619 km in 10 hrs 10 mins, or 61 km/h

- distance travelled, elapsed time, and average speed in kilometres (*and miles*);

(386 mls/38 mph)

* Nos. 6456, 6457 (GMD, 1989)

- these Locomotives built by General Motors Diesel Division in 1989;

* Nos. 8110 (ex-110), 8505 (ex-CP XY 3001, CP, VIA 601), HEARNE MANOR (3sc4rm5db1ct), PRINCESS (all Budd/AMFT, ex-CP)

- Coach No. 8110 ex-CP 110; Café Lounge No. 8505 (ex-CP Baggage-Dormitory No. 3001, then CP & VIA No. 601); Sleeper HEARNE MANOR 3 Sections, 4 Roomettes, 5 Double Bedrooms & 1 Compartment; Diner PRINCESS (all built by Budd for CP & rebuilt by AMF Technotransport);

* CHÂTEAU LAUZON (6de), LAURENTIDE PARK (1de1di) (Budd/AMFT/ARI/JRS, 1954-5; ex-CP)

- CHÂTEAU LAUZON 6 Deluxe rooms; LAURENTIDE PARK 1 Deluxe room & 1 Deluxe room accessible to persons with disabilities (both built by Budd for CP; rebuilt successively by AMF Technotransport, Avalon Rail Inc. & Julien-Rail-Solutions).

QUICK INDEX OF TRAINS TAKEN

<i>number</i>	<i>name/route</i>	<i>page(s)</i>
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ALBERTA PRAIRIE RAILWAY EXCURSIONS

-	Stettler-Big Valley (& v.v.)	90
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AMTRAK

6	<i>California Zephyr</i>	150
11	<i>Coast Starlight</i>	143
64	<i>Maple Leaf</i>	111
68	<i>Adirondack</i>	120
162	<i>Northeast Regional</i>	114
449	<i>Lakeshore Limited</i>	117
517	<i>Cascades</i>	141
528	<i>Capitol Corridor</i>	147

RÉSEAU CHARLEVOIX

-	Québec-Baie St-Paul (& v.v.)	129
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VIA RAIL CANADA

1	<i>Canadian</i>	30,47,62,83,94,102,133,135,138,161,173
2	<i>Canadian</i>	34,54,59,69,98,99,108,162,163
24	<i>Chaudière</i>	76
22	Montréal-Québec	169
28	Alexandria-Montréal	42
28	Montréal-Québec	127
35	Montréal-Alexandria	41
35	Québec-Montréal	131
37	<i>Laurier</i>	80

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<i>number</i>	<i>name/route</i>	<i>page(s)</i>
40	<i>Capital</i>	73,166
46	<i>Rideau</i>	38
53	Ottawa-Fallowfield	123
59	Fallowfield-Kingston	125
59	Ottawa-Toronto	45,81
60	<i>Meridian</i>	39
62	Toronto-Montréal	166
64	<i>Renaissance</i>	74,127
66	Cornwall-Montréal	41
69	<i>Bonaventure</i>	131,171
97	<i>Maple Leaf</i>	111
633	Montréal-Ottawa	42,123
637	Québec-Montréal	170
 WHEATLAND RAIL		
	<i>Wheatland Express</i>	85

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2020's

*ALBERTA/SASKATCHEWAN
MANITOBA/ONTARIO/QUÉBEC
BRITISH COLUMBIA*



2020's-2: VIA No. 2 *Canadian* heading east, somewhere in northern Ontario, photo taken from Observation Dome Lounge Sleeper LAURENTIDE PARK of No. 1, heading west (2022/06/27) [SANDRA DAWES].

OVERALL CONTEXT

Please note that, for the health and safety of all, if a passenger is observed not wearing a mask, they will be reminded by the onboard personnel. Any passenger failing to comply with the requirements of wearing a mask or to follow instructions from the onboard personnel after having been clearly warned of the consequences by the Service Manager, may be required to leave the train at the next stop.

(VIA, "Welcome Aboard: Guest directory for passengers in Sleeper Plus class", 2021/10).

During the third decade of this century, my retirement continued apace, but was interrupted during the first two years by Covid-19, with no trips registered during 2020 and 2021. So far (meaning through **2025**), train travel has involved trips: • by VIA Rail on the *Canadian* over various segments between Vancouver, Edmonton and Toronto, also in the Ontario-Québec Corridor; • on Amtrak's *California Zephyr*, *Coast Starlight* and *Lakeshore Limited*, also trains in the Northeast Corridor; and • on Alberta, Québec and Saskatchewan tourist trains. The above quotation reminds one of the upheaval caused by the pandemic during 2020 and 2021.

During the first half of this decade, VIA's route network and services remained largely static, a reflection perhaps of the drastic impact of Covid-19. The National Transportation Act Review panel's 2018 recommendations that VIA be given a legislated mandate and permission to raise funds in the private sector for a dedicated passenger railway between Montréal, Ottawa and Toronto, and that all support for the *Canadian* be eliminated, went unheeded by successive Liberal governments. VIA was in the process of replacing Ontario-Québec Corridor equipment. The corporation also continued to evaluate a dedicated passenger route between Toronto, Ottawa, Montréal and Québec City.

In the United States, the Biden administration focused somewhat on Amtrak, after four lost years under the former president Trump, during whose administration an attempt was made to kill the corporation's entire long-distance network. Some work actually began on a California high-speed line between Los Angeles and San Francisco, and a private company began conventional service in Florida on a line that would connect

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Miami with Orlando. Other high-speed proposals were far from fruition, and very modest compared to many countries in Europe and Asia. How far these initiatives would go depended, as always, on an unpredictable Congress, projected overall budgetary deficits, the usual competing interests, and the return of Trump to the presidency.

TRIP DETAILS

So far, during this decade, I've taken 58 trips and travelled 41,522 kilometres (*25,914 miles*) by train. Fifty of the trips were operated by Canadian-based service providers, eight by American-based.

Forty of these trips were in my "Coach" category and 18 in "Sleeper". Two were behind steam, and two on self-propelled trains. Forty-four were operated by VIA Rail, eight by Amtrak, two by Alberta Prairie Rail Excursions, two by Réseau Charlevoix, and two by Wheatland Rail.

By year, the longest distance travelled was 16,196 kilometres (*10,108 miles*) in 2024; the shortest, 8,314 km (*5,189 mls*) in 2022. By trip, the longest distance travelled was 3,221 kilometres (*2,010 miles*); the shortest, 16 km (*10 mls*). There were 705 units in the trains I took: 90 Locomotives & Related Units and 615 cars. The latter consisted of (by overall project category): Coaches & Daynitors, 194; Parlor & Club Cars, 42; Sleeping & Business Cars, 213; Dining & Other Meal Cars, 44; Lounge Cars, 97; Baggage & Miscellaneous Cars, 25.

Fastest average speed was from Toronto to Kingston on VIA's **Capital** (No. 40) (2023): 114 km/h (71 mph).

Slowest average speed was on WR's **Wheatland Express**, Wakaw to Cudworth (also 2023): 19 km/h (12 mph).

PLACES VISITED

(Note: * indicates by non-rail means)

BC – Vancouver; **ON** – Alexandria, Anna Lake*, Cornwall, Kingston, Long Sault*, Ottawa, Picton* and Toronto; **QC** – Baie-Saint-Paul, Montréal and Québec City; **SK** – Cudworth, Wakaw and Watrous. **In the**

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United States: **CA** – Emeryville, Sacramento and San Francisco*; **CO** – Denver; **MA** – Boston; **NY** – Albany and New York; **OR** – Portland. (**Note:** * indicates by non-rail means.)

PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY TRIPS

2022: **VIA Canadian**, Toronto to Edmonton (a late June trip on a busy “legacy” train, featuring interesting travelling companions and excellent staff cross the “Great Land”);

2023: **VIA Canadian**, Vancouver to Edmonton (fascinating run up the Fraser Valley largely in daylight, then overnight into Jasper by noon); **VIA Laurier** (No. 37), Québec City to Ottawa (riding, for the first time, on one of VIA's new Siemens Venture trains); **WR Wheatland Express**, Wakaw to Cudworth & return (a well-run excursion featuring good concessions and excellent on-board actors).

2024: **VIA Canadian**, Edmonton to Toronto (spring trip across the Prairies and Northern Ontario as the seasons changed); **AM California Zephyr**, Sacramento to Denver (over the highly scenic High Sierras, across the Nevada desert, and through the canyons of the Colorado Rockies); **TC Train de Charlevoix**, Québec to Baie-Saint-Paul & return (a pleasant excursion along the North Shore of the St. Lawrence River);

2025: **VIA Canadian**, Toronto to Edmonton (fall trip across Northern Ontario and Prairies); **VIA Bonaventure** (No. 69), Montréal to Toronto (first trip in Venture Business Class).

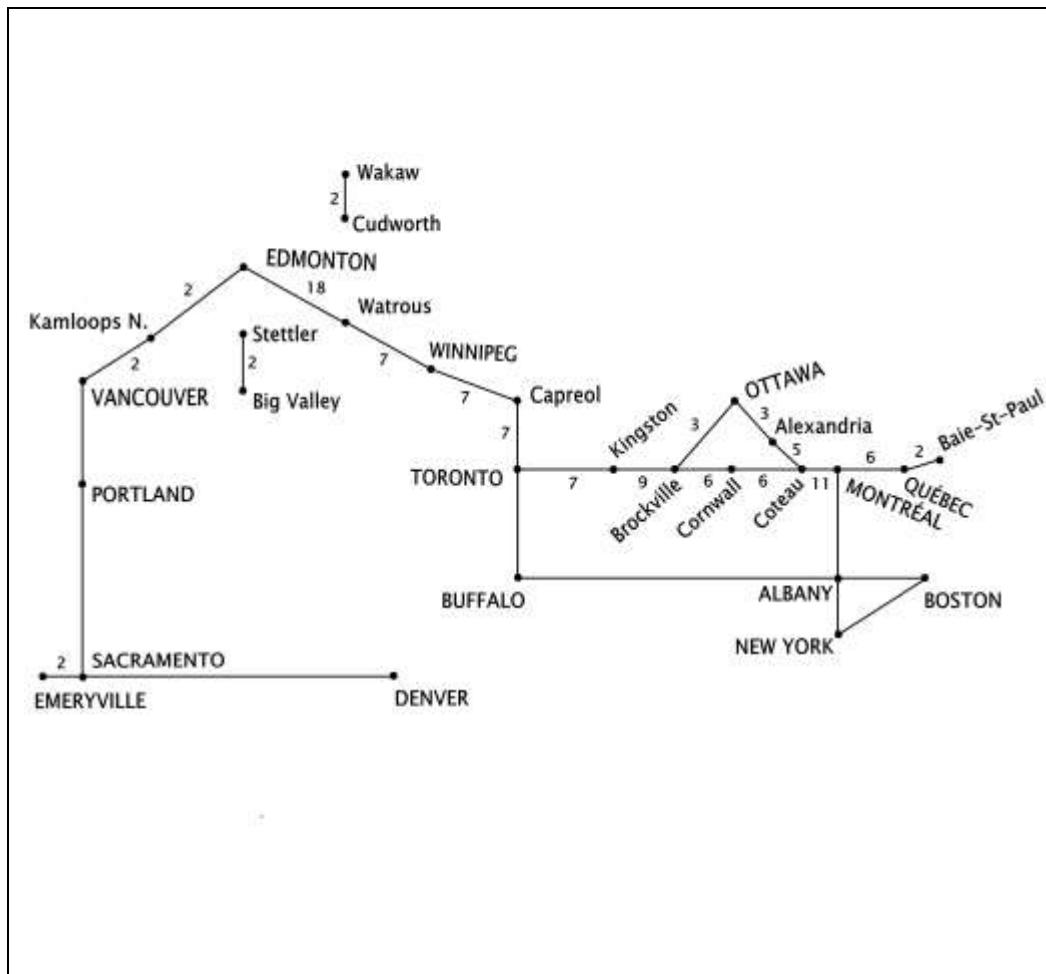
REMINDER!

All trips taken during these years were recorded, including consists.

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ROUTE SCHEMATIC

*[Showing number of one-way trips by segment
(one such trip unless shown otherwise); bus
transfer, Emeryville & San Francisco]*



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NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2022

2022

*ALBERTA/SASKATCHEWAN
MANITOBA/ONTARIO/QUÉBEC
BRITISH COLUMBIA*



[VIA advertisement sporting a current VIA slogan (2022)]

SYNOPSIS

I travelled by train in 2022 to visit family and friends in Saskatchewan and back east, and to return from Vancouver after seeing a favourite jazz musician – back in the saddle, post-Covid. The above slogan is from VIA's "Route Guide Toronto-Vancouver".

Trips taken: Thirteen trips were involved covering 8,314 kilometres (5,189 miles), all provided by VIA. Seven were in my "Coach" category, the other 6 in "Sleeper".

Equipment units: 178, made up of 20 Locomotives & Related Units and 158 cars (Coaches & Daynitors, 39; Parlor & Club Cars, 8; Sleeping & Business Cars, 69; Dining & Other Meal Cars, 12; Lounge Cars, 24; Baggage & Miscellaneous Cars, 6).

Places visited in Canada: **BC** – Vancouver; **ON** – Alexandria, Cornwall, Kingston, Long Sault*, Ottawa, Picton* and Toronto; **QC** – Montréal; **SK** – Watrous. (**Note:** * indicates by non-rail means.)

Noteworthy train trips: **VIA Canadian**, Toronto to Edmonton, Vancouver to Edmonton; **VIA No. 59**, Ottawa to Toronto.

Fastest average speed by a Canadian Service Provider: **VIA Meridian**, Kingston to Cornwall: 95 km/h (59 mph).

Slowest average speed by a Canadian Service Provider: **VIA Canadian**, Edmonton to Watrous, Vancouver to Edmonton & Watrous to Edmonton: all 47 km/h (29 mph).

HIGHLIGHT!

Riding VIA's *Canadian* from Vancouver to Edmonton – a well-operated and crewed train through the Rockies with the usual cast of great travelling companions, alas with evidence of the devastating wildfires of the previous year.

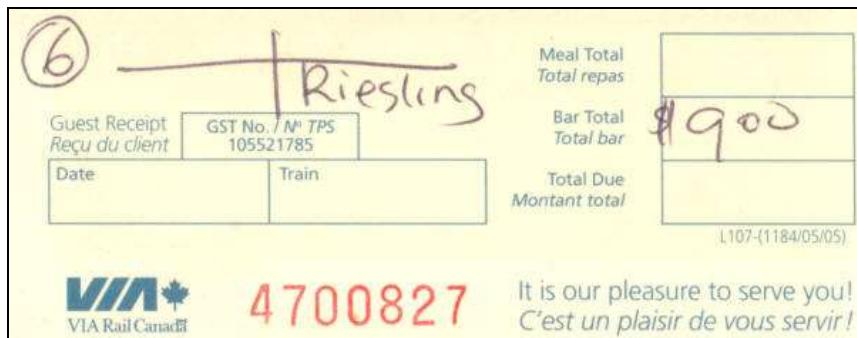
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MILESTONE

Simply returning to the rails after the first true pandemic I'd ever encountered, including on the *Canadian* over its entire route (No. 1, Toronto to Edmonton; No. 2, Vancouver to Edmonton.)



[From VIA information card ("We're moving with you", "Wear your mask at all times") (2020/10)]



[Receipt for a glass of wine, on board
No. 1 Canadian (2022/06/28)]

TRIPS AND CONSISTS

- **6 MAY:** To **WATROUS** by car with Sandra to visit her Mom, my intention being to return to Edmonton on the train, spend a week there, then go back to pick up Sandra.

10-11 MAY:

VIA 1 [TORONTO] WATROUS-EDMONTON [VANCOUVER] Canadian

E	[2]	6457,6456
X		8601
C	[2]	8120,8110
CfeL		8503
D		Princess
CfeL		8506
S	[7]	Hearne Manor ,Bell Manor, Dawson Manor,Hunter Manor, Wolfe Manor,Brant Manor, Amherst Manor
CfeL		8505
D		Acadian
S	[3]	Franklin Manor,Château Lauzon, Château Salaberry
OLS		Prince Albert Park

To **EDMONTON**, departing 1405 and arriving 0015 (*scheduled for 0754 and 2050, respectively*), including stops at Saskatoon and Wainwright AB, behind two General Motors F40PH-3's (home by taxi); * I occupied a Lower Berth in a MANOR car; * 619 km in 10 hrs 10 mins, or 61 km/h (386 mls/38 mph); * Nos. 6456, 6457 (GMD, 1989); * Nos. 8110 (ex-110), 8505 (ex-CP CfLC 505, VIA 505), 8601 (ex-CP XY 3001, CP, VIA 601), HEARNE MANOR (3sc4rm5db1ct), PRINCESS (all Budd/AMFT, 1954-5; ex-CP); CHÂTEAU LAUZON (6de), LAURENTIDE PARK (1de1di) (Budd/AMFT/ARI/JRS, 1954-5; ex-CP); * Similar or same consist observed on No. 2 at Edmonton on 14 JUN had 8516, not 8506, as second CfL.

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2020's-3: VIA No. 1 Canadian being serviced at Saskatoon, PRINCE ALBERT PARK on the rear (2022/05/10) [PETER DAWES].

WESTBOUND CANADIAN

VIA's mid-May No. 1 was 19 cars in length, including 10 Sleepers. It reached Watrous 6 hours, 11 minutes late, and arrived Edmonton 3 hours, 25 minutes behind – after some swift (for the *Canadian*) running, especially once in Alberta. After much searching through the VIA website, I finally was able to determine that the train was now operating twice weekly: Wednesday & Sunday out of Toronto; Monday & Friday out of Vancouver.



[Notice in men's washroom of HEARNE MANOR (as if there weren't enough reasons already for late running VIA trains!) (2022/05/10) [PETER DAWES]

COVID-19

During the worst of Covid-19, VIA ran the *Canadian* once per week in each direction, with all lounge space either closed or not provided. They also suspended the highly expensive “Prestige” class, in renovated CHÂTEAU Sleepers and the PARK car. Staff brought breakfast and lunch to your room, but did allow you to go to dinner in the Diner, on a strict (and highly spaced) reservation basis. Last year, during the various waves of Covid, the author tried to book a Lower on the *Canadian* between Watrous and Edmonton, once online and later by phone. Both times, I got right to the point of paying by credit card when, in the former case, I received a message saying the transaction could not be completed. In the latter case, the lady said she had to check something with her manager, then told me that they could not book that space for me, because it would take them 24 hours to sanitize the berth after I'd vacated (presumably in Edmonton), and that would make it impossible to resell. Why they let the transaction get all the way to the payment stage, before saying they could not sell that space for that trip, remains a mystery.

AN UNSCHEDULED STOP?

From VIA's *Welcome Aboard: Guest directory for passengers in Sleeper Plus class*, 2021/10), regarding Covid-19: “Please note that, for the health and safety of all, if a passenger is observed not wearing a mask, they will be reminded by the onboard personnel. Any passenger failing to comply with the requirements of wearing a mask or to follow instructions from then onboard personnel after having been clearly warned of the consequences by the Service Manager, may be required to leave the train at the next stop At any time during your trip, should you answer YES to either of the following questions, you must immediately speak with an onboard attendant or the Service Manager. • Do you have a fever and a cough? • Do you have a fever and breathing difficulties? Please contact a crew member if you have any concerns regarding the application of these preventive health measures”.

THE WATROUS SLAB

Watrous continued to offer only a concrete slab from which to board the train, but the nearby town visitor's information shack had been turned into a shelter of sorts, with benches. There was no attendant, and you had to key in a seemingly magic password to open the door – which the otherwise-highly-competent VIA telephone lady failed to provide when I booked.

INFORMATION DISCONNECT?

For train information prior to departure, I kept calling VIA's toll-free number (which gets you to Moncton NB), while Sandra kept checking the online VIA "Moving Maps" page. The information provided suggested an arrival at Watrous of between 1200 and 1600 hours, meaning between approximately four and eight hours late. As the train got closer to town, the difference between the information sources narrowed to almost infinity, thank goodness!

A GOOD MOVE

Despite Watrous-Edmonton being scheduled as a day segment, I booked a Lower Berth just in case No 1 was late – a persisting and chronic problem with the *Canadian*, due to CN freight congestion. I also preferred to be able to access one of the two Dining cars (in my case, PRINCESS, only three cars ahead), and to make use of PRINCE ALBERT PARK on the rear – requiring that I go "Sleeper Plus" class. I also figured that the Sleepers would be safer where Covid was concerned, although the narrow corridors of those cars – and the intimate seating in the Diner and the domes – made for close encounters. Everybody followed the rules and wore a mask, but my attendant failed to check to make certain that I was fully vaccinated – making you wonder how seriously VIA was following the federally mandated requirements. As for my Sleeper, I had recorded HEARNE MANOR five times going back to 1980, but this was my first occupying it.

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A PLEASANT DINING EXPERIENCE

I had no idea what to expect of No. 1, and was surprised at how busy it was, including a large number of younger people in the Sleepers. There was a noticeable contingent of British people, including one couple who had taken Cunard's QUEEN MARY 2 from Southampton to New York, then flown to Toronto to catch the train. At our table, we had an older Dutch guy, a retired CN locomotive engineer and union official, and a young guy who was a chef in a restaurant in Squamish BC – an excellent table in the always pleasant VIA Dining car.

ENTHUSIASTIC BUT INEXPERIENCED

Like many of the onboard staff, the attendant in my Sleeper, HEARNE MANOR, was making his very first trip. I got a bit concerned when he asked me at what time I would like to be wakened in the morning – considering I was only going to Edmonton! He actually was great with the passengers, and made up a very nice bed.

17-18 MAY:

VIA 2 [VANCOUVER] EDMONTON-WATROUS [TORONTO] Canadian

E	[2]	6457,6456
X		8608
C	[2]	8106,8119
CfeL		8509
D		Fairholme
CfeL		8517
S	[8]	Douglas Manor,Draper Manor, Sherwood Manor,Elgin Manor, Blair Manor,Monck Manor, Mackenzie Manor,Carleton Manor
CfeL		8501
D		Louise
S	[3]	Thompson Manor,Château Denonville, Château Joliet

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OLS

Glacier Park



2020's-4: An ahead-of-schedule No. 2 *Canadian* at Edmonton's "elegant" VIA station, led by F40H-3's 6457 and 6456 (2022/05/17) [PETER DAWES].

Back to **WATROUS**, departing 1950 (*on time*) and arriving 1045 (*scheduled for 0826*); * My access to Edmonton station was by LRT downtown, then taxi, and I again occupied a Lower Berth in a MANOR car;

* 619 km in 14 hrs 55 mins, or 56 km/h (386 mls/35 mph); * I somehow mis-recorded the second Skyline

Café Lounge as 8519, when the series ended at 8517.

AMAZINGLY EARLY!

This No. 2 was powered by the same two F40PH-3's as on No. 1 the week before, but there were 20 instead of 19 cars, an extra MANOR Sleeper being the difference. (This was the first time I'd occupied DOUGLAS MANOR.) No. 2 showed up in Edmonton at 1745 hours, 65 minutes early, which meant that the train would not leave for over two hours, at its scheduled 1950. When the VIA train Service Manager came into the station at around 1830 to check Sleeping car boarding passes, I asked him when boarding would occur. He replied; "I don't know; we've never been this early before"!

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SECURITY CHECKS AND COVID

When called to board at 1900 hours, we had our bags checked by a security guard manning a table in the station – something I'd never seen on VIA. The "check" consisted of a half-hearted opening of each bag, a quick look inside without actually checking anything, and then an "OK, enjoy your trip" – this for perhaps a dozen passengers, with loads of time (almost an hour) before train time!

BACK TO NORMAL

Alas, our on-time departure from Edmonton soon turned into a typical *Canadian* performance on CN's busy main line, filled with freights for Winnipeg, Toronto, Chicago, Memphis and New Orleans. We spent almost an hour just getting out of Walker Yard and were approximately 90 minutes late departing Wainwright AB. Then we actually left Biggar SK 15 minutes *early*, but were over two hours *late* after servicing at Saskatoon. No. 2 finally paused at Watrous two hours and a quarter late, disembarking myself and a gentleman heading for closeby Nokomis SK.

AN UNUSUAL SIGHT IN WALKER YARD

Sitting in Walker yard as we slowly pulled out was an eclectic, 7-car, CN executive train, consisting of Power Car FRASER SPIRIT, Business Car GREAT LAKES, Sleeper BATON ROUGE, Dome Lounge Observation AMERICAN SPIRIT, Reception/Marketing Car TAWAW, Coach ILLINOIS CENTRAL, and Observation/Theatre Car SANDFORD FLEMING. In the dusk, they appeared to be painted in a cream colour with red CN markings, and some of the names went back to CN's 1998 takeover of the Illinois Central. Most were built between 1950 and '55, the exception being heavyweight ILLINOIS CENTRAL, which probably went back to the 1920's. (*Bytown Railway Society's Canadian Trackside Guide 2022, 10-2/10-3.*)

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2020's-5: Canadian National work service train in Walker Yard, Edmonton, photo taken from VIA No. 2 *Canadian* (2022/05/17) [PETER DAWES].

FROM MEXICO TO ENGLAND

Contrary to most in Sleeper Plus class, my table mates at breakfast were two young males travelling to Toronto but independent of each other (one a Mexican fellow living in Vancouver; the other a 19-year-old, Daniel Ratcliffe-from-Harry-Potter-looking Englishman who seemed to be travelling the world). One is hardly ever disappointed with the people you meet on this train!

• **22 MAY:** Return to **EDMONTON** by car with Sandra, encountering No. 2 (which had left Vancouver on the 20th), just out of Watrous at 1155, three-and-a-half hours late on its way to Toronto (last two cars were CHÂTEAU VARENNES and KOOTENAY PARK).



[Another of VIA's touchy-feely slogans (from "Guest directory for passengers in Sleeper Plus class" pamphlet, 2019, back cover)]

16 JUN:

VIA 46 TORONTO-KINGSTON [OTTAWA] *Rideau*

E	6419
K	3458
C	[3] 3302,3371,3332

To **KINGSTON** via Toronto, beginning with an Air Canada flight and Union Pearson Express train to Union Station – the start of a 12-day trip to visit relatives and friends for the first time since the lifting of most Covid-19 restrictions, later destinations being Cornwall, Montréal, Alexandria and Ottawa; * Depart Union at 1532, arrive 75 minutes late at 1908 (three nights at the Hochelaga Inn, then two at the downtown Holiday Inn – our long-standing favourite Hotel Belvedere having closed for good during Covid; * We occupied a Coach in an LRC (Light-Rapid-Comfortable) train led by an F40H-3, stopping at Guildwood, Oshawa and Cobourg; * 254 km in 3 hrs 36 mins, or 71 km/h (159 mls/44 mph); * No. 6419 (GMD, 1987-9); * Nos. 3371, 3458 (ex-C 3382) (BBD, 1981-4).

UNION STATION SWITCHEROO

I had booked Ottawa-bound train No. 48 (depart Toronto at 1832, arrive Kingston 2105), to give us maximum leeway at Pearson, due to serious delays being experienced in handling bumper airline crowds. But things went smoothly for us, and we found ourselves at Union Station around 1500 hours, thus the switch to No. 46, departing at 1532. VIA staff did check our vaccination status while we were in the line waiting to board.

STRIKE POSES THREAT TO VIA TRAINS

Our entire trip was made stressful when the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers – representing CN signal and communication workers – struck on Saturday, June 18, three days after our arrival in Kingston. From what we saw, CN and VIA trains operated normally, with CN managerial staff ready to deal with any maintenance issues. The strike eventually would end on July 5th.

DELAYED AFTER COBURG

A severe thunder storm had just passed through the area east of Cobourg when we got there, delaying No. 46 for approximately 40 minutes while the track ahead was checked for fallen trees. At 1735 hours, we, for some reason, passed Montréal-bound No. 66, which had departed Union ahead of us, at 1517. At 1825, we met two westbound VIA trains, probably No. 67 from Montréal and No. 645 from Ottawa, one parked behind the other, waiting to be cleared to resume their trips.

- **18 JUN:** by car, courtesy brother David, to their **14 Island Lake** cabin north of Kingston for a get-together with Tani, other brother Ray and Mary-Rose, and our sister Dorothy, she having arrived from Montréal on VIA for the day;
- **20 JUN:** by rental car to **Picton** to visit niece Andrea and family for the evening, using the Glenora Ferry to cross the Bay of Quinte.

21 JUN:

VIA 60 [TORONTO] KINGSTON-CORNWALL [MONTRÉAL] Meridian

E	6419	
K	3458	
C	[3] 3318,3371,3332	
E	918	TORONTO-BROCKVILLE [OTTAWA]
K	4009	"
C	[4] 4109,8107,4106,8104	"

To **MONTRÉAL**, with a stopover at **Cornwall** to visit cousin Ken and Marion for the afternoon, departing 3 minutes late at 0918, arriving 15 minutes behind at 1108, occupying an LRC Coach and pausing only at Brockville to detach the Ottawa portion; * 174 km in 1 hr 50 mins, or 95 km/h (109 mls/59 mph). * By car, courtesy our hosts, around the countryside, ending up at **Long Sault** to visit the graves of my parents.



[viarail.ca, 2016]

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2020's-6: VIA "J-train" No. 60 for Montréal (pulled by F40H-3 6419), No. 50 for Ottawa attached behind (Genesis P42DC 918), Kingston (2022/06/21) [SANDRA DAWES].

VIA J-TRAIN

Our Kingston-Cornwall conveyance was a VIA "J-train" ("J" for Joint), No. 60 made up of LRC cars in the lead heading for Montréal, No. 50 consisting of HEP-1 & 2 (Head End Power) cars at the rear for Ottawa. At one point, west of Brockville in 3-track territory, No. 60-50 was on the north track, passing another VIA train in the middle track (possibly No. 51, Montréal-Ottawa-Toronto), and a long CN container train on the south track. Between Brockville and Cornwall, there were a couple of mighty thumps as our train attempted to make up time along a long tangent stretch. [Note: *No. 51 was VIA's first train of the day from Montréal to Ottawa, then ran through to Toronto, perhaps more for equipment reasons than for attractiveness to Montréal-Toronto passengers, considering its longer and slower path.*]

VIA 66 [TORONTO] CORNWALL-MONTRÉAL

E	6437
K	3459
C	[3] 3336,3369,3334

Depart 14 minutes late at 1922, arrive Central Station 20 minutes behind at 2038, again occupying an LRC Coach and stopping only at Dorval – a masked buddy Shaun meeting us at the station, but out-of-action for the duration of our stay due to just having gotten Covid (four nights at the Hotel Griffintown); •

22 JUN: by Société de transport de Montréal (STM) Métro to visit nephew Charlie, Meghan and growing family; • **23 JUN:** by Réseau de transport métropolitain (RTM) bus across the Champlain Bridge to visit sister Dorothy and family members in Brossard for the day, the construction of the Réseau express métropolitain (REM) light-rail line in full view, in Griffintown, on the bridge, and at the Terminus Brossard Panama transit centre.

24 JUN:

VIA 35 [QUÉBEC] MONTRÉAL-ALEXANDRIA [OTTAWA]

E	917
K	4005
C	[4] 4116,8105,4104,8108

Day excursion to my old home town of **ALEXANDRIA** ON, departing Central Station 1154, arriving approximately on time at 1316, with stops at Dorval, then Coteau, pulled by a Genesis P42DC locomotive and occupying a former Southern Pacific, Texas & New Orleans, Amtrak, etc., Coach, rebuilt for VIA under its HEP-2 program – the idea being to show Sandra my old haunts, including the United Church on the Hill and adjacent manse in which I grew up, the Pond where I was a teenaged swimming teacher and life guard, the high school, and, of course, the ex-Canada Atlantic/Grand Trunk/CN station where I spent many hours watching the trains; * No. 35 originated at Québec, meaning it had to back out of Central Station onto the approaches to Victoria Bridge before heading west to Dorval and beyond – this adding perhaps 10 minutes to the Montréal-Alexandria or Ottawa trip; * 100 km in 1 hr 22 mins, or 74 km/h (62 mls/46 mph); * No. 916 (GE, 2001); * No. 4116 (Budd/AMFT, 1950; ex-SP 2362, T&NO 435, SP 2223, AM 3902, AM,HF,RSC 3816); * No. 8105 (ex-105), 8517 (ex-CP CfLC 517, VIA 517); * Possibly an additional, unrecorded HEP-1 8100-series Coach between 4116 & 8105.



2020's-7: VIA's Alexandria ON station (2022/06/24) [PETER DAWES].

VIA 28 [OTTAWA] ALEXANDRIA-MONTRÉAL [QUÉBEC]

E	911
K	4009
C	[4] 4109,8107, 4106 ,8104

Depart six minutes late at 1705, arrive Central Station 11 minutes late at 1815, scheduled to call at Coteau as well as Dorval but passing up the former due to no business on that day – the same on-board crew as on No. 35 in the morning; * 100 km in 1 hrs 10 mins, or 85 km/h (62 mls/53 mph).

25 JUN:

VIA 633 MONTRÉAL-OTTAWA

E	6413
K	3473
C	[3] 3333 ,3303,3359

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2022



2020's-8: VIA Ottawa-Montréal-Québec No. 28 arriving Alexandria ON,
powered by Genesis 911 (2022/06/24) [SANDRA DAWES].

To **TORONTO** via **Ottawa** on our way home, departing Central Station 0900 and arriving Ottawa pretty much on time at 1104; * The stopover was for the purpose of meeting with cousins Sue and Donald and spouses for an extended lunch at the Ritz restaurant on the scenic Rideau Canal – Sue picking us up at the station; * We then walked alongside the canal before picking up the Ottawa OC Transpo LRT line at Rideau Station for a quick transfer back to the VIA station; * 187 km in 2 hrs 4 mins, or 90 km/h (117 mls/56 mph).

THE FIRST TO GO

In recent years, our normal practice after our lunch with my McLaren cousin(s) was to walk to the Byward Market and meet up with my old buddy, work colleague and roommate, Glen Brunton, for “CC&C” (carrot cake & cappuccino), preceded by a beer. Alas, Glen passed away in 2021 during the Covid lockdown, from long-standing heart problems. (Note: *Regarding the photo below, Shaun, at the time, was inspired to take on the persona of “The Dude”, from the “black comedy crime film”, “The Big Lebowski”, and had designated Glen as another character, “Walter Sobchak” – thus the greeting sign.*)



2020's-9: (Left-to-right) Glen Brunton, Shaun Fawcett and the author at Central Station in connection with the Montréal F1 qualifying car race (2008/06/06) [UNKNOWN CUTE FRENCH GIRL ON THE CONCOURSE].

FROM TINA TURNER TO THE F1

Glen was never a big train-rider, but during our mutual stint at the old Canadian Transport Commission in 1969-70, we and colleagues used our rail passes to ride on:

- CN's overnight train from Ottawa to Toronto to visit airline companies, with drinks in the Sleeper Lounge;
- CN's afternoon Ottawa-to-Montréal train to see the Ike & Tina Turner Review, with supper in the full Dining car;
- CN's northern Manitoba overnight from Winnipeg to The Pas for more meetings;
- CPs *Canadian* from Winnipeg back to Ottawa, with its domes and rear-end PARK car.

Much more recently, in 2008, Glen took an afternoon VIA train to Montréal to attend Formula One qualifying – thus the above photo. R.I.P., dear friend.

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VIA 59 OTTAWA-TORONTO

E	919
K	[2] 4000,4004[dd]
C	[4] 4114,4122,4108,4101

Depart 36 minutes late at 1825, arrive Union Station 1 hour, 12 minutes behind at 2345, with stops at Fallowfield, Smiths Falls, Brockville, Kingston, Belleville, Trenton Jct., Cobourg, Oshawa and Guildwood (one night at the Pantages Hotel, accessed by Toronto Transit Commission's Yonge Street subway – our usual Strathcona Hotel near Union Station being closed at the time); * We treated ourselves to Business Class in another of VIA's HEP-2 cars, this one a formerly owned by Southern Railway, Amtrak, National Railroad Historical Society, and Rail/Sea Cruises; * 446 km in 5 hrs 20 mins, or 84 km/h (278 *mls/52 mph*); * No. 4000 (*Budd/AMFT, 1949, ex-C SOU 830, AM 5291, SOU, NRHS, RSC 830*).

PANIC CITY

Our Toronto trip began in high farce, as only VIA can sometimes provide. Sitting in the Business Class lounge, we listened as the excited attendant told us, half an hour before departure, that a CP freight had broken down and was blocking the way at Smiths Falls, delaying several VIA trains. (VIA must negotiate CP's expansive yard and cross its main Montréal-Toronto line in order to get from its own, ex-CN, Ottawa-Smiths Falls line to its former CP Smiths Falls-Brockville line.) Around 1800 hours, the attendant breathlessly told us something to the effect that "there's a big problem and it doesn't look good", and that we had better consider our options. This did not go over well among the passengers, as we demanded to know what alternative transportation VIA would provide – she would have to check with her manager on that. One passenger advised that there were no hotel rooms available in Ottawa due to a jazz festival and pride celebrations. Another suggested we all take the last train to Montréal, which was then boarding, and connect there with VIA's overnight *Enterprise* to Toronto – alas, VIA no longer operated an overnight train on that route. Considering we were booked on the *Canadian* the next morning out of Toronto, Sandra and I were furiously consulting airline schedules from Ottawa to Toronto when the attendant came back out and advised that No. 59 would be departing shortly after all, the problem at Smiths Falls having been resolved. Yes, she had jumped the gun, but we were all relieved that we'd be in Toronto that evening after all.

A FINE MESS

Our No. 59 met no less than three sister trains on the way just from Ottawa to Brockville, all delayed by the CP freight breakdown (scheduled arrival time at Ottawa indicated): • No. 42 at Fallowfield (1657); • No. 44 at Smiths Falls (1843); and • No. 46 at Brockville (2014). Just imagine how many passengers were inconvenienced by this one event – another indication as to how much VIA suffered by having to operate over, or cross, predominately freight lines owned by other companies.

BUSINESS CLASS

... was lightly loaded, given it was a Saturday night. Serving perhaps a dozen customers, the sole attendant was excellent, periodically encouraging us to have another glass of wine, or a liqueur. The meal was at the high end of heat-up fare, offering three entrees. A few people were making intermediate trips, one lady boarding at Kingston for Guildwood; a guy even joining at Belleville and leaving at Oshawa. First quibble: as on some of our other trips, we had to ride backwards, VIA having made half of the seats permanently forward-facing, the other half backward, so as to avoid having to turn the cars. Second: the seats were quite hard and unforgiving, a far cry from the plush versions in the heavyweight Parlor cars of yore!

 PRESTO

**Ticket
Billet**

1-Ride/1 Trajet

EXPIRES/EXPIRE

23 SEP/SEP 2022

0100 5615 039

FOR USE ON:
Utilisation sur:



[Back of ticket issued by the Toronto Transit Commission for one subway trip (2022/06/25)]

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26-28 JUN:

VIA 1 TORONTO-EDMONTON [VANCOUVER] Canadian

E	[2]	6456,6441
X		8616
C	[2]	8116,8125
CfeL		8512
D		Palliser
CfeL		8507
S	[9]	Rogers Manor, Fraser Manor , Cabot Manor,Laird Manor, Burton Manor,Bayfield Manor, Craig Manor,Drummond Manor, Allan Manor
CfeL		8517
D		Imperial
S	[3]	Château Roberval,Château Dollard, Château Maisonneuve
OLS		Laurentide Park

Depart Union Station 0945 (having accessed the station by subway), arrive 20 minutes early three days later at 2030, major stops occurring at Sudbury Jct., Capreol, Hornepayne, Sioux Lookout, Winnipeg MB, Melville SK, Saskatoon, Biggar and Wainwright AB – also on request at Watrous; * We occupied our usual Section in a MANOR car; * 3,221 km in 60 hrs 45 mins, or 53 km/h (2,010 mls/34 mph).



[Name plate on the side of our VIA Sleeping car,
No. 1 Canadian, photo taken at Capreol
ON (2022/06/26)] [PETER DAWES]



2020's-10: VIA No. 1 *Canadian* heading west, somewhere in northern Ontario,
photo taken from Observation Dome Lounge Sleeper LAUREN-
TIDE PARK (2022/06/26 or 27) [SANDRA DAWES].

ENDLESS LAKES, TREES AND PRAIRIE

This was our first trip on the *Canadian* between Toronto and Edmonton westbound since 2011, although we did it eastbound in 2016. This was a 21-car, 2-locomotive version, much the same as on our previous trips between these points but now featuring the rebuilt "Prestige" Sleepers CHÂTEAU DOLLARD and CHÂTEAU MAISONNEUVE, also Scenic Dome Lounge Sleeper LAURENTIDE PARK. This was as close to an on-time trip as it gets for this train, the worst tardiness recorded by the author being 3 hours at Sioux Lookout, and 2 hrs 15 mins at Winnipeg. Being 20 minutes early at Edmonton almost conflicted with the eastbound No. 2, which left for Toronto early at 2030, just before we arrived. There was the usual parade of CN freights, mostly container trains, including one delay at Sudbury Jct. due to the crew having to be replaced because they had reached their regulated maximum hours. The entire run from Wainwright right into Edmonton was relatively quick, due to only the occasional freight, and negotiating Walker Yard was slow but easy.

BUSY, BUT NOT OVERLY SO

Out of Winnipeg, members of the Vancouver-based crew told the author that there were 29 crew members on board (a 30th having been left behind due to Covid-like symptoms), catering to 148 guests in the 12 Sleepers and 60 in the two Coaches – a good load but not exceptional for this point in the summer. At least one Sleeper, CHÂTEAU ROBERVAL, was dedicated to crew, and perhaps the equivalent of one more would have been assigned to that purpose – in which case the average passenger count per revenue Sleeper equivalent was perhaps 15. For the most-common MANOR cars, this represented around 50% of capacity (10 in the 10 single Roomettes, 12 in the six Double Bedrooms, and 6 in the three Sections, to use the old, pre-VIA terminology). As for the Sections, passengers appeared to be concentrated in perhaps half of Sleepers, these accommodations in the rest left unoccupied. Our Section was relatively quiet, Sandra reporting no undue creaking in the antiquated pulleys of her Upper – although there was some such noise in the Upper across the aisle.

COVID-19

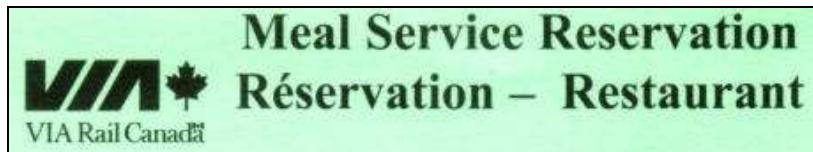
By the time the *Canadian* left Toronto Union on June 26th, VIA no longer was requiring proof of vaccination before boarding, only that everyone wear a mask on board the train, except when in the act of eating or drinking. Compliance was high in our part of the train (“Sleeper Plus”), although the crew occasionally had to remind people to re-mask. On our visits to the rear-end LAURENTIDE PARK (which still was reserved for “Prestige” customers until 1600 hours each day), we did notice a far lesser degree of compliance, perhaps because these people were paying huge amounts and the crew did not want to jeopardize their tips by cracking down.



[From VIA information card (“We’re moving with you”)] (2020/10)]

CREWS

Out of Toronto, the crews were Winnipeg-based; from Winnipeg west, they were from Vancouver, although they often were from Winnipeg on that segment. The Sleeping car attendant, who took care of the Sections in a FRASER MANNER as far as Winnipeg, was very good – she was actually based in adjacent ROGERS MANOR, while our newbie lady was being trained elsewhere in FRASER. We did not see much of her replacement out of Winnipeg, because the berths had already been prepared before we arrived there, and we were going to be off the train before nightfall in Edmonton. The staff of Dining car "A", PALLISER, were uniformly excellent, as was the food – although our server from Winnipeg west confused some orders and got all stressed out. In LAURENTIDE PARK, there appeared to be half-a-dozen or so staff, all of them well-trained, friendly and angling for good tips from the high-rolling Prestige clientele. In our Skyline "activity" car, the girl out of Toronto was very enthusiastic, but light on knowledge. She had the Hudson Bay Co. "York boats" coming across the Atlantic Ocean, then up the rivers, when they most certainly did only the latter. When we met No. 2 somewhere in northern Ontario, she said it had been relegated onto "the other track because we're No. 1" – patently false, because VIA trains ran fully merged into the CN freight flow. And her French was excruciatingly bad – worse, infused with giggles! In contrast, the guy west of Winnipeg, who improbably was from Colombia, was excellent, especially doing the wine tasting and bingo, and eager to learn from Saskatchewan-born people such as Sandra – and his French was actually very good!



[From VIA meal reservation form used on the Canadian (2022)]



2020's-11: In the "Activity" car, Skyline 8507, somewhere in Saskatchewan heading west on the *Canadian*, including: Sandra (standing, 2nd from left); Kayo (seated, 3rd from left); August (with the hat); the author (seated, forgetting to remove his mask); and Hiroe (standing between August and the author) (2022/06/28) [UNKNOWN FELLOW PASSENGER].

AN INTERESTING GROUP OF TRAVELLERS!

We encountered lots of fascinating characters, including:

- two young Japanese girls (Hiroe and Kayo) who were studying in Vancouver and decided to fly to Toronto specifically to ride the *Canadian* back across to see the country;
- an 18-year-old New York boy, with the unusual name of August, who was fascinated by this train and decided to take it across Canada;
- a young German couple with a 5-month-old boy who were checking out Canada to see if he could further his career with the hockey equipment maker CCM;
- a couple from Waterloo ON who worked for an industrial metal finishing company who just wanted to try something different;
- a lady from Ottawa who had welcomed "truckers" into her church during the takeover of Ottawa by "convoy" back in January and February, and supposedly encouraged some to return home to Alberta – but was now a free trip on the *Canadian* won through a contest;
- an Irish lady who ended up complaining to train staff about the endless trees and lakes of northern Ontario. Quirky but a good group overall.



2020's-12: VIA No. 1 *Canadian* slowing for a request stop at Watrous SK, the classic elevator now operated by a private grain company, photo taken from Skyline No. 8507 (2022/06/28) [PETER DAWES].

THE BIG WAVE

We had planned to take some photos of Watrous, where the *Canadian* paused on request at 0934, one hour and 40 minutes late, to drop off one gentleman. Sandra had phoned her Mom to tell her we'd be coming through, and instead got sister Iris, who decided to drive Mom over to the famous "concrete slab". Sandra announced to the crowd in Skyline 8507 (both in the dome and downstairs lounge) that her mother and sister would be meeting the train, and asked that everyone wave – which they enthusiastically did, while Mom and Iris waved back with hankies (*photo, next page*). The gentleman in the safety vest is one of the train's two locomotive engineers, who had stepped down to help with the passenger deboarding, but ended up chatting with the wavers. All in all, quite the thrill for a 92-year-old lady!

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2022



2020's-13: Author's mother- and sister-in-law wave to the occupants of Skyline 8507 during VIA No. 1 *Canadian*'s stop at Watrous SK, alongside one of the train's locomotive engineers (2022/06/28) [UNKNOWN FELLOW PASSENGER].

• **30 JUL:** To **VANCOUVER** with Sandra by Air Canada, primarily to attend two jazz concerts by the American singer/pianist Champian Fulton, and to take the *Canadian* back through the mountains (access to the Sylvia Hotel via Canada Line Skytrain and No. 5 bus; later by No. 6 to Frankie's Italian Restaurant & Jazz Club and back, this route and the 5 severely disrupted by a massive evening fireworks display right across from our hotel on English Bay); • **31 JUL:** Back again to Frankie's, this time by taxi due to a huge, late running pride parade which again disrupted the 5 and 6 buses, then a slow return to the hotel on the 6 through massive crowds still milling about, circa 2300 hours!

1-2 AUG:

VIA 2 VANCOUVER-EDMONTON [TORONTO] *Canadian*

E	[2]	6407,6401
X		8616
C	[2]	8125, 8129
CfeL		8501
D		Palliser
CfeL		8507
S	[10]	Château Roberval, Rogers Manor, Fraser Manor, Cabot Manor, Laird Manor, Grant Manor, Drummond Manor, Craig Manor, Bliss Manor, Allan Manor
CfeL		8512
D		Imperial
S	[2]	Château Joliet, Château Maisonneuve
OLS		Laurentide Park

Return to **EDMONTON** (beginning with the No. 5 bus and Expo Skytrain to Pacific Central Station, transit back to normal after the dual weekend extravaganzas); * Depart on time at 1500, arriving 15 minutes early next day at 1835, stops including Agassiz, North Bend, Ashcroft, Kamloops North, Blue River, Valemont and Jasper AB; * As usual, we occupied a Section in one of the MANOR cars; * 1,245 km in 26 hrs 25 mins, or 47 km/h (777 m/s/29 mph).

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2022



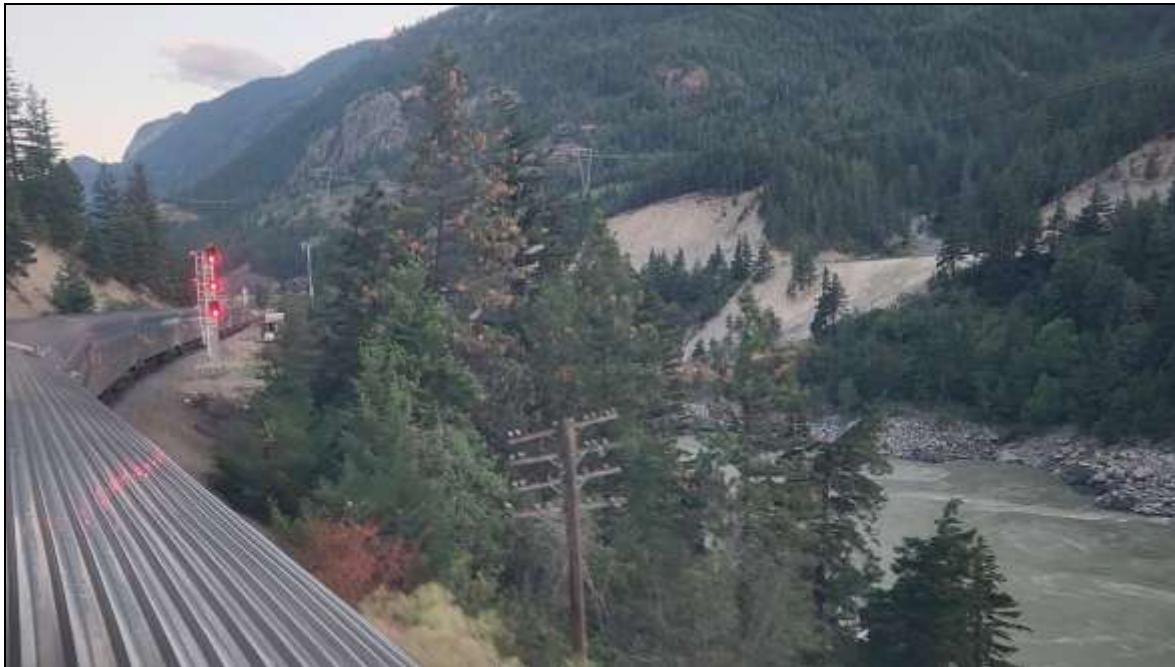
2020's-14: No. 2 Canadian "Train Configuration" display at Pacific Central Station, Vancouver (2022/08/01) [SANDRA DAWES].



2020's-15: Pacific Central Station, Vancouver (*far left-to-right*): • a glass-roofed "Panorama" Coach; • EVANGELINE PARK; • Café Lounge 8507, at the rear of the front section of No. 2 *Canadian*; and • LAURENTIDE PARK, at the end of the back section (2022/08/01) [SANDRA DAWES].

BACK HOME THROUGH THE ROCKIES

Our 21-car *Canadian* boarded on two tracks: the front portion including the locomotives back through Café Lounge No. 8507; the back portion from CHÂTEAU ROBERVAL to LAURENTIDE PARK. We ran close to on time the entire way, in contrast to our last trip over this route back in 2019 when we were 9½ hours late into Edmonton, due mainly to freight congestion. Between Mission City and Ashcroft, No. 2 used the CP line, before switching over to CN for the run to Kamloops North and all the way through to Edmonton. (In order to maximize capacity and reduce congestion, westbound freights of both companies ran on CP eastbound and CN westbound.) At one point, we could see four freights on the CN line across the Fraser River heading for Vancouver, a CN, a CP, another CN and another CP in succession. One sobering view was the charred remains of Lytton BC, which had been destroyed the previous summer by a wildfire.



2020's-16: No. 2 Canadian on CP, looking back from Café Lounge No. 8507; CN's line visible on the other side of the Fraser (2022/08/01) [SANDRA DAWES].

SIMILAR CONSIST

Our No. 2 featured different locomotives than we'd encountered on our No. 1 from Toronto to Edmonton (**26-28 JUL** above), but many of the same cars, if sometimes in different positions in the train. (The same cars, by type: 1 of 2 Coaches; 2 of 3 Café Lounges; 2 of 2 Diners; 7 of 9 MANOR Sleepers; 2 of 3 CHÂTEAU Sleepers; and the PARK Observation Lounge Dome Sleeper.)



[Dilapidated name plate on the side of VIA "Skyline" car, No. 1 Canadian, photo taken at Saskatoon (2022/09/09)] [SANDRA DAWES]

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2022



2020's-17: VIA No. 2 Canadian being serviced at Jasper, led by F40H-3's 6407 & 6401 (2202/08/02) [SANDRA DAWES].

THE SECTIONS TO OURSELVES

According to the Service Manager, we had 234 passengers on board out of Vancouver, including two large American tour groups (both off at Jasper), and one small Australian group (going all the way to Toronto). This was the first time I'd occupied ALLAN MANOR, in which all the rooms were sold out to Jasper, but we were the only ones in the three sections. When I booked the trip, the VIA website told me there were no Lower Berths available, so I reserved two Uppers. When we boarded, we found that all three Lowers were empty. After consulting with the Service Manager, our attendant said we could use the Lower and Upper of one section, at no additional charge – in fact, it was easier physically for her to make up the Lower and Upper in the one section. East of Jasper, once the tour group has cleared out, there was only one passenger, other than ourselves, in the entire car.

INTERESTING PEOPLE

There were the usual interesting people on the train, including a younger couple from Korea, a retired Australian lady librarian, a retired civil engineer, a teacher couple from Massachusetts, and a Vancouver-based photographer with Metis roots who was completing her master's degree by photographing the train trip from Vancouver to Winnipeg, then on to northern Manitoba. The last-mentioned had lived for two decades in Switzerland with her German husband and often taken the precise and frequent Swiss trains – meaning she was truly amazed by the *Canadian*!

6-7 SEP:

VIA 2 [VANCOUVER] EDMONTON-WATROUS [TORONTO] Canadian

E	[2]	6445,6440
X		8602
C	[2]	8116,8108
CfeL		8503
D		Princess
CfeL		8516
S	[10]	Lorne Manor, Sherwood Manor, Franklin Manor, Dunsmuir Manor, Bell Manor, Dawson Manor, Bayfield Manor, Amherst Manor , Cornwall Manor, Blair Manor
CfeL		8505
D		Annapolis
S	[2]	Château Lauzon, Château Denonville
OLS		Prince Albert Park

To **WATROUS**, departing 2335 and arriving 1245 next day (*scheduled for 1950 and 0826, respectively*), including stops at Wainwright, Biggar SK and Saskatoon (access to Edmonton station by LRT & taxi); * I occupied a Lower Berth in a MANOR car; * 619 km in 13 hrs 10 mins, or 47 km/h (386 mls/29 mph).

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2022

TWO CANADIAN'S FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

Back to Watrous on the *Canadian* to pick up Sandra, who had taken the same train a couple of weeks earlier to spend an extended time with Mom – we having decided to do this routine all by train this time. VIA's 21-car No. 2 was delayed into Edmonton by around three hours by an out-of-control wildfire in Jasper National Park – this fire having cut the electrical system in the town and area, thus affecting CN's signals and making the train crawl along. Complicating things was the arrival of No. 1 at 2157, VIA having scheduled both No. 1 and 2 into Edmonton on Tuesdays within an hour of each other – this on a bi-weekly service involving only four arrivals and four departures in an entire week! Not scheduled out until midnight for Jasper and Vancouver, No. 1 was brought into the station at 2150, to let people off (but not on), then back out, then back into the second track, where it stood until No.2 finally showed up at 2240. All of this provided entertainment for this traveller during his 4-hour wait at the station, considering he'd never before seen two trains manoeuvring about this Edmonton station.

THE GOOD AND THE BAD

Next morning, it was good to see Fabien, the steward in diner ANNAPOLEIS again, after he'd provided such good service on our August Vancouver-to-Edmonton trip, and Laura, the attendant in AMHERST MANOR, was top notch. My experience the evening before in PRINCE ALBERT PARK was not so positive. Having finally been allowed to board No. 2 three hours later than if it had been on time, I went back for my traditional "train-away" Scotch, arriving there at 2333 hours, only to have the attendant tell me that the bar had closed three minutes earlier at 2330. Not only that, she said that the dome was now available only to "Prestige" passengers, not lowly frequent "Preference" clients such as me. Not good, VIA!



[VIA's three classes on the Canadian (viarail.ca) (2023)]



2020's-18: VIA No. 2 Canadian arriving Watrous SK, led by F40H-3's 6445 & 6440 (2022/09/07) [SANDRA DAWES].

AMHERST MANOR

This was my first time occupying AMHERST MANOR, although I'd encountered this car six times going back to 2006, including Watrous to Edmonton back on **10-11 MAY** of this year. The VIA agent who arranged my trip went the extra yard to place me in a Sleeping car that had no one else on the Sections – a nice gesture.

Drummond Manor

[New style name plate on the side of VIA Sleeping car, No. 1 Canadian, photo taken at Saskatoon (2022/09/09)] [SANDRA DAWES]

9 SEP:

VIA 1 [TORONTO] WATROUS-EDMONTON [VANCOUVER] Canadian

E	[2]	6455,6446
X		8616
C	[2]	8107,8117
CfeL		8500
D		Palliser
CfeL		8507
S	[10]	Elgin Manor,Craig Manor, Wolfe Manor,Abbot Manor, Rogers Manor,Laird Manor, Drummond Manor, Jarvis Manor Bliss Manor,Grant Manor
CfeL		8512
D		Imperial
S	[2]	Château Cadillac, Château Varennes
OLS		Laurentide Park

Back to **EDMONTON** with Sandra, departing 0815 and arriving 2120 (*scheduled for 0754 and 2050, respectively*), including stops at Saskatoon and Wainwright AB (home by taxi); * We occupied Upper Berth space in a MANOR, in day position; * 619 km in 13 hrs 5 mins, or 47 km/h (386 mls/29 mph).

INTERESTING INFORMATION

We returned to Edmonton on a nearly on time No. 1, also 21 cars in length. The Winnipeg onboard crew were very good, from the Dining car steward and waiters to the guys manning the bar in LAURENTIDE PARK. The fellow in Activity car 8512 provided some interesting information (take it with a grain of salt) about the *Canadian*, including that: • CN charged VIA \$42,000 for each *Canadian* that ran over its line; • VIA planned to maintain the twice weekly frequency over the winter, and add a third for next spring/summer/fall; and • the consist of the train typically fell from 21 to nine cars during the winter.



2020's-19: A Saskatchewan “salt storm”, somewhere west of Biggar, photo taken from No. 1 Canadian (2022/09/09) [SANDRA DAWES].

NOT SO ACCURATE

The Activity car guy also had prepared an amazingly detailed board showing all the points of interest across the prairies. Alas, he was not always accurate in his presentation, for example saying: • that the prairie provinces had only 2 million inhabitants (the real number: around 7 million); • that he'd never seen northern lights west of Portage la Prairie (they can be seen across the region); and • that the long CN container trains ran out of Vancouver, Toronto and Montréal (they also ran out of Prince Rupert and Halifax).

MORE RULES

VIA seemed to be adding more rules to govern where passengers could go on the train and off. In addition to the 2330 hours cut off for non-Prestige customers in the PARK car mentioned above under my **6-7 SEP** trip, an announcement was made, prior to No. 1 entering Saskatoon station, that CN Police had been issuing tickets for anyone straying from the platform. Furthermore, VIA no longer allowed passengers to go beyond the Baggage car to take photos of the locomotives.

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2022

GRANT MANOR

We purchased two Uppers in GRANT MANOR, so as to be able to enjoy meals in the IMPERIAL and the domes of Skyline 8512 and LAURENTIDE PARK, the latter within the specified hours. This was the first time I'd occupied GRANT MANOR, although I first recorded this car in a train way back in 1974. (Actually, of the MANOR cars I occupied during 2022, five of six were first times.)

THE LIFE OF A TOUR DIRECTOR

It was nice to see a large tour group on board No. 1, this one from Britain heading for Jasper for a couple of nights, then by bus down the Icefields Highway to Banff, and the *Rocky Mountaineer* onward to Vancouver and home. Alas, the wildfire which had disrupted the electrical supply led to the scrapping of their Jasper stay and an immediate change of plans to switch from the *Canadian* right onto a bus and stay in Calgary instead – cue one frazzled tour director.

A BUFFER CAR ON THE REAR

On Nov. 15, 2022, the author was heading for groceries at the Watrous Co-op store when he noticed the *Canadian* accelerating out of town at approximately 1020 – well past its 0754 timing but not at all bad for this train. Although there was no time for recording numbers and names, I saw the usual two locomotives and no less than 16 cars – this in mid-November: a Baggage car; two Coaches; two Skylines; seven regular Sleeping cars; a Diner; two Prestige Sleepers; a Park car; and a “Buffer car” at the rear. A “Buffer car”? The month before, VIA had begun adding an unoccupied car to the rear of all trains equipped with HEP-1 and HEP-2 equipment after an inspection conducted by an independent consultant found that there might be structural defects in the cars, which were originally built in the late 1940's and 1950's, then rebuilt during the 1990's. A further investigation was to be carried out by the National Research Council for the Transportation Safety Board.

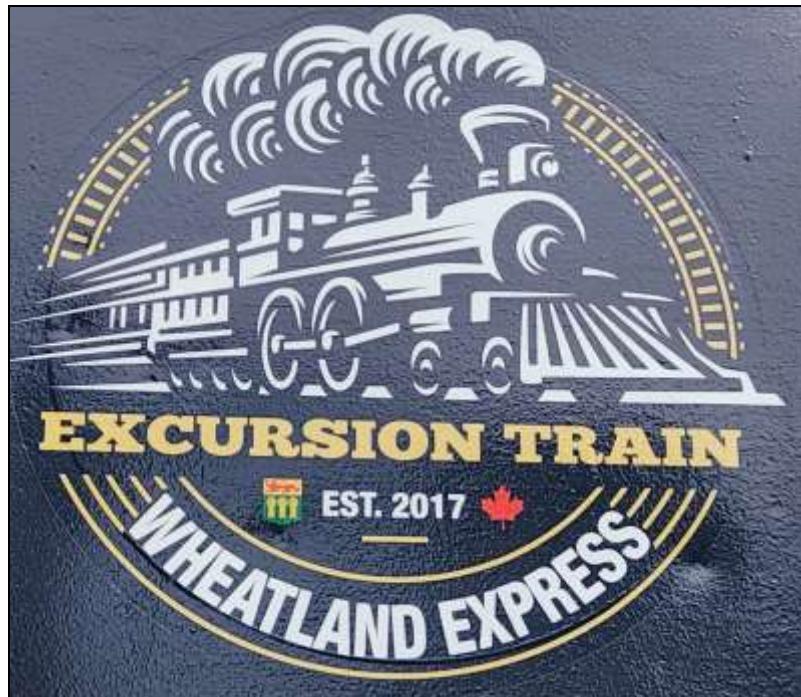
THE LAST TIME?

From Jason Shron of Rapido Trains Inc.: “A new fleet can take up to 10 years to deliver, and we need new long-distance trains right now. The crashworthiness of the Budd cars is currently being tested Even if they are cleared for service, nobody knows if they will last until new equipment arrives. There is a chance that my kids’ most recent trip on The *[Canadian]* might have been the last time they’ll have the experience, and I can’t believe it’s come to this. Canadians deserve a properly funded, national passenger rail service” [*“Our passenger rail service is running out of time” (Globe and Mail, 2022/11/06, O6).*]

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2023

2023

*ALBERTA/SASKATCHEWAN
MANITOBA/ONTARIO/QUÉBEC*



*[From side of Wheatland Express Car No.
2021 (2023) [SANDRA DAWES]]*

SYNOPSIS

I travelled by train in 2023 to visit family and friends in Saskatchewan and back east, and took tourist trains in Alberta and Sask. The above *Wheatland Express* badge is interesting if not particularly accurate, given that the train was hauled by diesel-electrics, not a stream engine!

Trips taken: Fifteen trips were involved covering 10,740 kilometres (6,703 miles), 11 by VIA and two each by Alberta Prairie Rail Excursions and Wheatland Rail (WR). Eleven were in my "Coach" category, the other 6 in "Sleeper".

Equipment units: 205, made up of 26 Locomotives & Related Units and 179 cars (Coaches & Daynitors, 64; Parlor & Club Cars, 8; Sleeping & Business Cars, 51; Dining & Other Meal Cars, 12; Lounge Cars, 36; Baggage & Miscellaneous Cars, 8).

Places visited in Canada: **AB** – Edmonton, Big Valley and Stettler; **ON** – Anna Lake*; Kingston, Ottawa and Toronto; **QC** – Montréal and Québec City; **SK** – Cudworth, Wakaw and Watrous.
(**Note:** * indicates by non-rail means.)

Noteworthy train trips: **VIA Canadian**, Edmonton to Toronto; **VIA Laurier**, Québec City to Ottawa; **WR Wheatland Express**, Wakaw to Cudworth.

Fastest average speed by a Canadian Service Provider: **VIA Capital**, Toronto to Kingston: 114 km/h (71 mph).

Slowest average speed by a Canadian Service Provider: **WR Wheatland Express**, Wakaw to Cudworth: 19 km/h (12 mph).

HIGHLIGHT!

Taking the *Wheatland Express* tourist train from Wakaw to Cudworth SK and back, over an original Grand Trunk Pacific (later CN) line between Young and Prince Albert – a well-run excursion featuring good concessions and on-board actors.

MILESTONE

Riding, for the first time, one of VIA's new Siemens Venture trains from Montréal to Québec City, then back through Montréal to Ottawa – one of 32 sets which will replace the corporation's aged LRC, Renaissance and HEP (Head-end Electric Power) equipment in the Québec-Windsor Corridor.



*[From menu provided on No. 27,
Québec-Ottawa (2023/05/12)]*



[absteamtrain.com]

TRIPS AND CONSISTS

25-28 APR:

VIA 2 [VANCOUVER] EDMONTON-TORONTO Canadian

E	[2]	6437,6421
X		8612
C	[2]	8108,8117
CfeL		8501
S	[3]	Hunter Manor ,Allan Manor, Draper Manor
CfeL		8516
D		Emerald
S	[5]	Monck Manor,Amherst Manor, Brandt Manor,Wolfe Manor, Bayfield Manor
CfeL		8504
D		Louise
S	[2]	Château Cadillac,Château Salaberry
OLS		Prince Albert Park
Sbfr		Christie Manor

To **TORONTO** with Sandra, departing at 1950 and arriving Union Station three days later at 1429 (on time in both cases), at the start of a trip taking in Kingston, Montréal, Québec and Ottawa (access to station by taxi); * Included were stops at Wainwright, Biggar SK, Saskatoon, Melville and Winnipeg MB, Sioux Lookout ON, Hornepayne, Capreol and Washago, behind two General Motors F40PH-3's; * We occupied a Section in one of the MANOR cars; * By Toronto Transit Commission's Yonge Street subway to the Pantages Hotel, near Dundas Station, for two nights; * 3,221 km in 64 hrs 39 mins, or 50 km/h (2,010 mls/31 mph); * Nos. 6412, 6407 (GMD, 1986-9); * Nos. 8108 (ex-CP/VIA 108), 8612 (ex-CP 3012, CP/VIA 612), 8501 (ex-CP/VIA CfLC 501), HUNTER MANOR (3sc4rm5db1ct), EMERALD (all Budd/AMFT, 1954-5; ex-CP); * CHÂTEAU CADILLAC (6de), PRINCE ALBERT PARK (1de1di) (Budd/AMFT/ARI/JRS, 1954-5; ex-CP).



2020's-20: VIA No. 1 *Canadian*, led by F40PH-3 6458, moves slowly through CN's Walker Yard, Edmonton, in a photo taken from No. 2's "Activity" Skyline car 8516 (2023/04/25) [SANDRA DAWES].

BACK EAST ON THE CANADIAN

Our 20-car, No. 2 *Canadian* arrived in Edmonton from Vancouver 15 minutes early at 1835, and left on time at 1950, passing inbound No. 1 from Toronto on its way out of town. This was the 10th time I'd recorded HUNTER MANOR, but only the first I'd occupied this car. This was our first trip all the way to Toronto since 2016, and our train was amazingly close to schedule all the way across the prairies, Northern Ontario and right down through Muskoka cottage country into T.O. The journey started out on a sour note when the grumpy guy in charge of EMERALD would not serve us dinner, even though the second and final sitting would not begin until half an hour *after* we'd boarded. All was forgiven when the new crew on at Winnipeg turned out to be fantastic, from the Service Manager through to the lady in charge of our Diner and our car attendant. (The Service Manager amused the passengers by singing "Do Do Do" in imitation of the gong that often accompanies announcements, cracking up his fellow employees as well.)



2020's-21: VIA No. 2 Canadian during the Sioux Lookout ON servicing stop, F40PH-3 6437 leading, the English equivalent of VIA's slogan being "Love the Way" (2023/04/27) [SANDRA DAWES].

BUFFER CARS

Further to a consultant's report that questioned the structural integrity of its ancient HEP (Head-end Electric Power) fleet, VIA was adding an unoccupied "Buffer" car at the end of such trains. This meant that one could no longer watch the tracks recede while sitting in the rear lounge of the *Canadian*'s PARK car, and passengers were no longer allowed to bring pets on board because the Baggage car was off-limits. After further evaluation by the Transportation Safety Board, the Buffer requirement was rescinded on May 17, the day after our trip concluded.



[From VIA Route Guide, Toronto-Vancouver, 2017]



2020's-22: The view from PRINCE ALBERT PARK in No. 2 *Canadian*, somewhere in Northern Ontario, obstructed by "Buffer" car CHRISTIE MANOR (2023/04/27) [SANDRA DAWES].

EVERTHING FROM VEGEMITE TO DRUGS

Two highly contrasting anecdotes from our trip: • the Australian lady producing a small jar of "Vegemite" (the "national" breakfast spread of her country) in EMERALD, part of a supply aimed at lasting her during the whole time away from her country; and • the attendant of one of the two day coaches (which were right ahead of their Coach Skyline car and our sleeper HUNTER MANOR) bringing a passenger – who appeared to be high on something but quite docile – into the shower room of our car, where he apparently was expected to sober up. In this regard, the day coaches always housed an interesting group of travellers, to say the least – most of whom jumped off at each servicing stop to smoke one thing or another. (The Aussie lady and her husband seemed amazed that possession of small amounts of marijuana for personal use was now legal in Canada, unlike the situation back home.)

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2023

TORONTO IN A DELUGE

Our three days in Toronto rain featured the Blue Jays defeating the Seattle Mariners 3-2, the roof of the Rogers Centre closed of necessity (tickets purchasable only by cell phone; a near sellout due to the first 15,000 getting a free ball shirt; and almost \$65 for two small hot dogs & two beers). Other attempts to avoid the rain involved the excellent Ripley's Aquarium of Canada and St. Lawrence Market. (*Our local travel was all on the TTC's Yonge subway between Union and Dundas stations: total of nine rides.*)



[\[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toronto_Blue_Jays\]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toronto_Blue_Jays)

[\[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seattle_Mariners\]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seattle_Mariners)

30 APR:

VIA 40 TORONTO-KINGSTON [OTTAWA] Capital

E	6417
C	8109bfr
K	4002
C	[4] 4113,4116,4100,8126bfr

To **KINGSTON**, departing Union Station at 1032 and arriving 1246, on time in both cases; * We occupied a Coach in a HEP (Head-end Power) train stopping at Guildwood and Belleville only (two nights at Hochelaga Inn); * 254 km in 2 hrs 14 mins, or 114 km/h (159 mls/71 mph); * No. 4100 (*Budd/AMFT, 1953, ex-C&EI 481, L&N 3243, AM 5802*); • **2-4 MAY:** To **Anna Lake** (near Barrys Bay) by rental car to visit brother Ray and Mary-Rose, joined next day by brother David and sister Dorothy (also cousin Pam), returning to Kingston two days later.



2020's-23: Brother Raymond's ex-Canadian National caboose,
Anna Lake ON (2023/05/03) [SANDRA DAWES].

4 MAY:

VIA 64 [TORONTO] KINGSTON-MONTRÉAL Renaissance

E	6453
K	[2] 3463dh?,3452
C	[3] 3325,3368,3316,3341

To **MONTRÉAL**, with Dorothy along, departing on time at 1411, arriving Central Station five minutes late at 1700, having stopped at Brockville, Cornwall and Dorval; * We occupied an LRC (Light-Rapid-Comfortable) Coach; * 285 km in 2 hrs 49 mins, or 101 km/h (178 mls/63 mph); * Nos. 3368, 3452 (ex-C 3385) (*both BBD, 1981-4*).

BUSY ... FOR CANADA!

Kingston station was a relatively busy place around 1400 hours, with a long westbound CN freight preceding No. 65 arriving from Montréal and No. 53 from Ottawa – all before our No. 64 arrived from Toronto and departed for Montréal.

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2023



2020's-24: Blackbear Sg. Inc. bulk-carrier SUNDAM in St. Lawrence Seaway, approaching Côte Ste-Catherine lock, Sandra at left (2023/05/07) [PETER DAWES].

SUNNY MONTREAL

We spent parts of five days in sunny Montréal, staying again at the Hôtel Griffintown, featuring: • a bus over the Champlain Bridge to Brossard to visit Dorothy; • the Orange & Blue Metro lines from Bonaventure to Parc in Le Plateau to see nephew Charlie and family; and a Sunday bicycle ride, led by buddy Shaun, over the “Ice Bridge” and alongside the Seaway to Côte Ste-Catherine lock & back.

STILL TESTING

During our stay at the Hôtel Griffintown, the location of our 6th floor room allowed us to see (and hear) frequent test runs of the driver-less Réseau express métropolitain (REM) between Central Station and Panama terminus (Brossard), over the Champlain Bridge. Opening date for this segment was pending, and would not happen until the fall. Already, residents in the condo land that is Griffintown were complaining about the noise, which was noticeable to us even with our windows closed, and very much so with them open.



2020's-25: Réseau express métropolitain (REM) test train and Amtrak's recently restored, New York-to-Montréal *Adirondack*, from the roof of Shaun's Griffintown condo (2023/05/07) [SANDRA DAWES].

9 MAY:

VIA 24 [OTTAWA] MONTRÉAL-QUÉBEC *Chaudière*

E	2202
K	[2] 2601,2701
C	[2] 2901, 2801
CabC	2301

To **QUÉBEC**, departing Central Station 25 minutes late at 1310, arriving Gare du Palais 15 minutes behind at 1633, stopping at St-Lambert, St-Hyacinthe, Drummondville, Charny and Ste-Foy; * We occupied a Coach in one of VIA's new Venture trainsets; * 272 km in 3 hrs 23 mins, or 80 km/h (170 mls/50 mph); * All SMS 2021;
* My recorded car numbers indicate 2201 rather than 2202 as locomotive.



2020's-26: VIA No. 24 just arrived in Gare du Palais, Québec City, from Montréal – our first trip on one of VIA's new Siemens Venture train sets (2023/05/09) [SANDRA DAWES].

CHAUDIÈRE

An interesting sight greeted us on the platform in Central Station when VIA No. 24 finally boarded its passengers after arriving from Ottawa some 15 minutes late: a new "Venture" train set, led by a "Charger" locomotive. The lateness meant a longer time standing in the line in Central Station, always made worse by the scarcity of seating. (To inject some nostalgia, *Chaudière* was the name assigned to this train back in the 1990's before VIA canned most train names.)

SIEMENS

[commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Siemens_AG_logo.svg]

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2023



VIA **VIA Rail Canada**

WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU THINK.

We're thrilled to have you on board our new train, and we'd love to know your thoughts!

BY PARTICIPATING
you could win a \$500* VIA Rail Travel Credit.

Please scan this code with your phone camera to take our short survey.

*Conditions apply. You must be 18 or older to take part in the survey.
TM Trademark owned by VIA Rail Canada Inc.

[Questionnaire in the seat-backs of VIA No. 24, requesting feedback on the new Venture trains (2023).]

THE VENTURES

Our train was one of the first of 32 “semi-permanently coupled” Venture sets to be delivered and put into service. Built by Siemens Mobility at Sacramento CA, they were powered by an SCV-42 “Charger” locomotive pulling two Business cars, two Economy cars, and a “Cab-Coach” at the other end. Capacity was 194 in Economy and 87 in Business, for a total of 281, accessibility provided by six lifts and five spaces for mobility devices. Maximum speed was 200 kilometres (125 miles) per hour. Our train featured a larger than usual onboard crew, possibly for training purposes, and the only big issue was a horrible smell akin to expired milk when the snack cart came by! Other observations: • higher speeds up to the maximum would be feasible only if track were to be substantially upgraded; • bi-directional capability obviates the need to turn the trains, and made it easy, as in the case of our through Ottawa-Montréal-Québec train, to access a stub-end station like Montréal Central without having to back in or out; • semi-fixed train sets are always a concern where peak travel days are concerned, because extra cars cannot be readily added; and • it was surprising to see open overhead baggage racks, given the danger of luggage being thrown around in an accident.

LA VILLE DE QUÉBEC

We spent parts of four days in this city which, in this author's view, ranks up there with San Francisco and New Orleans as tops in North America. Sandra knew her way around, having studied French at Université de Laval and worked as a domestic back in the day. We did the mandatory ferry over to Lévis and back, and next morning noticed Holland-America's ZAANDAM, in port on one of several Boston-Montréal cruises. (We had taken her to Alaska back in 2018.) We also did a tour of the Assemblée nationale du Québec, and took in question period, once the playground of premiers such as René Lévesque and Jean Charest.



[Operator of the Lévis ferry (fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Société_des_traversiers_du_Québec)]



2020's-27: The St. Lawrence at Québec, featuring Holland-America's ZAANDAM berthed and Canada Steamship Lines' bulk-carrier WHITEFISH BAY heading up river (2023/05/11) [SANDRA DAWES].

12 MAY:

VIA 37 QUÉBEC-OTTAWA *Laurier*

CabC **2301**

C [2] 2901,2801

K [2] 2601,2701

E 2202

To **OTTAWA**, departing Gare du Palais 20 minutes late at 1246, arriving 2 hours 15 minutes behind at 2050, stopping at Ste-Foy, Drummondville, St-Hyacinthe, St-Lambert, Montréal, Dorval and Coteau (scheduled stop at Alexandria passed up); * We occupied the Cab-Coach in the same Venture trainset that took us from Montréal to Québec, which was reversed in Central Station for the trip onward to Ottawa; * By automobile to cousin Susan & Russ' place for one night; * 459 km in 8 hrs 4 mins, or 57 km/h (286 mls/35 mph); * *As noted for No. 24, my recorded car numbers indicate 2201 rather than 2202 as locomotive.*

CASCADING LATENESS

... but mostly not VIA's fault this time! **First**, VIA No. 37 departed 20 minutes late because eastbound No. 22 from Ottawa and Montréal, due at Gare du Palais at 1152, was late. Already 15 minutes behind arriving Drummondville, No. 37 sat for 35 additional minutes waiting for an ambulance to take a passenger to hospital in unknown-to-us circumstances. This made arrival in Central Station almost an hour late, and departure 45 minutes behind (air-quality was poor as we sat there, because it was underground with diesel-electric locomotives idling or moving in and out). Generally speaking, running trains through Central Station was bound to cause delays down the line, inconveniencing the vast majority of passengers who were not travelling through. **Second**, an even longer delay occurred because an elderly lady had been hit by a CN freight at Beaconsfield, nine kilometres [*six miles*] west of Dorval, causing us to be held at the latter point while the police investigated. Finally receiving clearance to leave Dorval two hours late at 1904, we passed the idle freight, which was blocking both the CN and adjacent CP double track lines. According to news reports, the lady had been attempting to cross the tracks when hit, and she would die the next morning.

RECORD PASSAGE?

VIA No. 37 blasted through my old home town of Alexandria at 2008, passing up its scheduled stop, hopefully because no one was booked to either disembark or embark! Given our 2050 arrival in Ottawa, this meant the 87 kilometres [*54 miles*] was covered in 42 minutes, for an average speed of 124 km/h [*78 mph*] – possibly a record speed, at least with me onboard, over this segment.

13 MAY:

VIA 59 [OTTAWA] FALLOWFIELD-TORONTO

E	902
C	4120bfr
K	4009
C	[4] 4101,4110,4109,4112bfr

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2023



2020's-28: Toronto-bound No. 59 arriving at Fallowfield station
on the western outskirts of Ottawa, led by P42DC
902 (2023/05/13) [SANDRA DAWES].

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2023

To **TORONTO**, after an excursion through the Eastern Ontario countryside to **Merrickville** by automobile, returning to Fallowfield station in time for our train (courtesy Sue and Russ); * Depart five minutes late at 1816, arrive Union Station 37 minutes late at 2310, behind a Genesis P42DC locomotive – stopping at Smiths Falls, Brockville, Kingston, Belleville, Trenton Jct., Cobourg, Oshawa and Guildwood; * By TTC subway to Dundas Station (one night at Pantages Hotel); * 430 km in 4 hrs 54 mins, or 88 km/h (288 mls/55 mph); * No. 902 (GE, 2001); * No. 4009 (Budd/AMFT, 1949, ex-C SAL 6216, SCL,AM 5201, AM, NRHMI, RSC 6014, VIA 4125).

SATURDAY EVENING LOCAL

For the second year in a row, we went Business Class in No. 59, which made nine intermediate stops between Ottawa and Toronto – the purpose being to access the *Canadian* for our long trip home (my first time occupying No. 4009). I had booked this train out of Ottawa station, and the attendant was not too happy about having to open his door for us at Fallowfield – even though the VIA lady on the phone *and* the Fallowfield ticket agent had assured me there would be no problem. This being a light Saturday evening, there were only a dozen others in Business, looked after by what turned out to be a good-natured attendant who heated up a quite tasty meal. We had the common Smiths Falls delay caused by a CP freight and arrived almost 40 minutes late.

14-16 MAY:

VIA 1 TORONTO-EDMONTON [VANCOUVER] *Canadian*

E	6429	TORONTO-WINNIPEG
E	[2] 6458,6431	
X	8615	
C	[2] 8108,8117	
CfeL	8501	
S	[3] Hunter Manor, Allan Manor, Draper Manor	
CfeL	8516	
D	Emerald	
S	[5] Monck Manor, Brandt Manor,	

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2023

	Sherwood Manor ,Wolfe Manor,
	Bayfield Manor
CfeL	8504
D	Louise
S [2]	Château Cadillac,Château
	Salaberry
OLS	Prince Albert Park
Sbfr	Christie Manor

Back home to **EDMONTON**, departing at 0955 (after a subway ride from our hotel to Union Station) and arriving three evenings later, just 10 minutes behind schedule at 2000, again occupying a Section in a MANOR car; * 3,221 km in 60 hrs 5 mins, or 54 km/h (2,010 mls/33 mph).

THE CANADIAN WESTWARD

With three exceptions, our 20-car No. 1 had the same consist as No. 2 at the start of our trip: • a third locomotive assisted the usual two as far as Winnipeg; • Baggage car 8615 replaced 8612; and our SHERWOOD MANOR replaced AMHERST MANOR. (This was the 14th time I'd recorded SHERWOOD, but only the second time I'd occupied it.) As with No. 2, No. 1 stuck mainly to schedule, even arriving 40 minutes early at Winnipeg, giving passengers enough time to explore the former CN railyard since redeveloped as "The Forks" (this referring to the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine rivers). Our train featured a large, escorted group of Scots, Welsh and English, heading for Jasper, then Banff, Lake Louise and Vancouver, some set to return immediately home, others going on to Vancouver Island or up the Inside Passage on Holland-America's KONINGSDAM. The onboard Winnipeg-based crew was great east of that city; the combined 'Peg-Vancouver crew likewise to the west. The main excitement in our car occurred when a large, older gentleman, who was traveling on his own, had to be relocated to a not-so-roomy Roomette (Single Cabin) when he could not hoist himself up the ladder into his Upper Berth.

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2023



2020's-29: Newly arrived *Wheatland Express* at Cudworth, led by Great Sandhills GP38-2s (2023/06/17) [PETER DAWES].

- **7 MAY:** To **Watrous** by car with Sandra, at the start of a 12-day visit with her family.

17 MAY:

WR WAKAW-CUDWORTH & RETURN *Wheatland Express*

E	[2]	5543,5541
CL	[2]	2020,2017
C	[3]	2022, 2021 ,2018
Lge		3430?

To **WAKAW** by car, to ride this tourist train, departing 1400, arriving Cudworth 1500, non-stop, powered by two Electro-Motive Division (General Motors) GP38-2's (equipment owned or leased by Great Sandhills Railway); * We occupied seats in one of two, depowered, ex-Boston & Maine Rail Diesel Car RDC1's; * Returning, depart 1525 arrive 1625, then back to Watrous by car; * 19 km in 1 hr, or 19 km/h (12 mls/12 mph); * No. 5541 (EMD, 1971, ex-N&W/NS 4143, NS 5541 (leased from FUR); * No. 2021 (Budd, 1955; ex-B&M/MBTA/CCS/SG 6120); * No. 2017 (ACF, 1955; ex-UP CfeL/Dn 4001, AM D 8398), * No. 2018 (ACF, 1954; ex-UP S 4585 ALPINE GROVE (14sc), C 5545, AM 5545); * No. 2020 (Budd, 1948; ex-CX [no other info.]; * No. 3430? (Budd, 1937; ex-ATSF X, MS).

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2023



2020's-30: *Wheatland Express* at Cudworth, ready to return to Wakaw (2023/06/17) [PETER DAWES].

WHEATLAND EXPRESS

... offered themed excursions over 19 kilometres (12 miles) of track between Wakaw and Cudworth SK, ranging from our "Murder on the Wheatland Express" to "Adeline's Wedding", "Halloween Ghost Train Express", and "Prairie Train Heist". The excursion was around an hour each way, with 25 minutes at Cudworth during which the locomotives were run around the train for the trip back. Off-the-train dinner excursions had been offered at Cudworth in past years, but, at the time of our trip, none was scheduled for 2023.



[From the side of Coach No. 2021 (2023/05/17)] [PETER DAWES]

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2023



2020's-31: Inside the "Accessible Car" of *Wheatland Express*, gift shop at the rear (2023/06/17) [SANDRA DAWES].

WHEATLAND RAIL

... owned and operated the Cudworth Subdivision, which ran 75 km (46 miles) from a connection with Canadian National (CN) at Totzke, north through Cudworth and Wakaw to St. Louis. The company functioned in cooperation with Great Sandhills Railway (GSR), a short line based in Leader SK which ran over 198 kilometres (124 miles) of track connecting with Canadian Pacific at Swift Current. The *Wheatland Express* route was built by Grand Trunk Pacific (GTP) north from Young, on its main line, reaching Wakaw in 1912 and Prince Albert in '17, before GTP was folded under CN, formally as of '23. Tri-weekly passenger service on the line had ended in 1960.

ECLECTIC TO SAY THE LEAST

The consist of *Wheatland Express* was eclectic to say the least, the exteriors a riot of colours and slogans: • **No. 2017**: called “Diner Car”, but actually a lounge with bar, seating for 20; originally Union Pacific [UP]); • **No. 2018**: “Safety Car” with seats for 30; emblazoned outside with slogans like “Safety Train SK”, also “Transport Canada” (again, ex-UP); • **No. 2020**: “Accessible Car” with lift, seating 30, bar & gift shop; (provenance unknown); • **Nos. 2021 & 2022**: Unnamed but Coaches, seats for 60 & bar; originally Boston & Maine RDC1's; • **No. 3430?**: “Baggage Car”; lounge & bar for 8; ex-Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe; and • **Nos. 5541 & 5543**: GP38-2 locomotives originally built for Norfolk & Western Railroad in the U.S. and subsequently leased by Great Sandhills from First Union Rail.



[From gsrail.net (2023)]

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2023

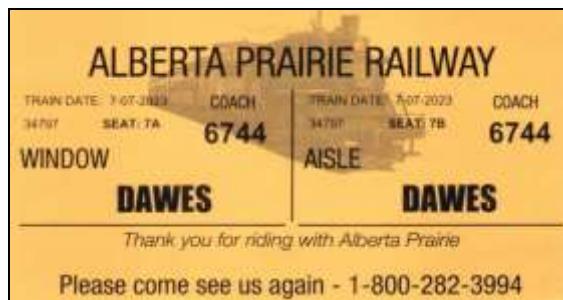
DONE IN BY A GOLD TICKET PUNCHER

Total capacity of the *Wheatland Express* apparently was 208, with around 100 on board this day, served by perhaps a half-dozen train employees ranging from the operating crew to a train manager and bar tenders – all well-trained and friendly. Then there were the actors, another half-dozen or so who circulated throughout the train earnestly discussing clues with the passengers in fake southern U.S. accents. Hokey, yes, and not so much for the train purist, but well done. (The villain, “Prof. Zephrim Snodgrass”, ended up in the stalks, having committed murder with a “Gold Ticket Puncher”!)

- **19 MAY:** Return to **Edmonton** by car.
- **5-7 JUL:** To **Stettler** by car, via Sylvan Lake and Brooks to watch nephew Tyler play ball in the Western Canadian Baseball (college) League.



[Wheatland Express ticket (2023/05/17)]



[Alberta Prairie seat check, 2023/07/07]



2020's-32: Alberta Prairie train waiting to depart Stettler for Big Valley, behind Consolidation No. 41 (2023/07/07) [SANDRA DAWES].

7 JUL:

APRE STETTLER-BIG VALLEY & RETURN

Es	41
L	Lone Star
C	[3] 6741,6603,7279
OBS	663045
C	[2] 6744 ,5080
LS	Glen Sutton
W	79146



[Shield from side of locomotive No. 41, 2023/07/07] [SANDRA DAWES]

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2023



2020's-33: Alberta Prairie No. 41 being watered at Big Valley, after running around to head the train back to Stettler (2023/07/07) [SANDRA DAWES].

Day excursion with Sandra to **BIG VALLEY** on Alberta Prairie Railway; * Depart Stettler 1430, arrive Big Valley at 1610, behind 2-8-0 Consolidation No. 41 (formerly owned by the St. Louis-San Francisco, Central Western, and other railways); * We occupied Coach No. 6744, built in 1952 for CN as an Electric Multiple Unit commuter coach for service through the Mount Royal tunnel in Montréal; * Returning, depart 1700 (with the locomotive at the front running backwards), arrive Stettler 5 minutes late at 2005 (including approximately 90 minutes at Warden Jct.) – then to Edmonton by car; * 34 km in 1 hr, 40 minutes, or 20 km/h (21 mls/12 mph), on outward trip; * No. 41 (BLW, 1920; ex-JLC&E 41, SLSF, MRL, NARC 77, CWR 9); * No. 6744 (CCF, 1952; ex-T5); * LONE STAR (CCF, 1924; ex-CN C 5082); * GLEN SUTTON (CCF, 1921, 4sc; ex-CP 10ct Glen Orchard, 8sc4db Virden, Verdun, Work 411293, CWR 1920).



[From side of Coach No. 4744, 2023/07/07] [SANDRA DAWES]



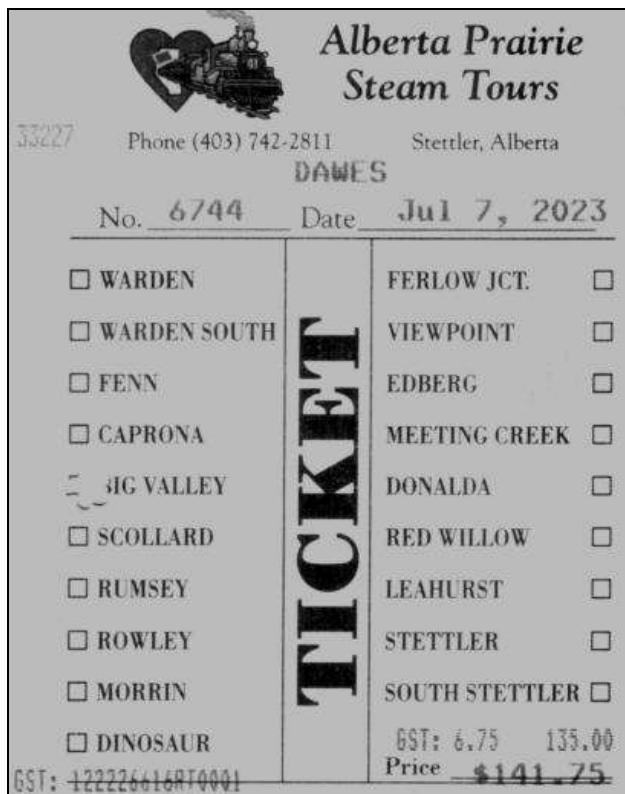
2020's-34: Tender sitting outside of a shed housing out-of-service 4-8-2 Mountain locomotive No. 6060, Warden AB (2023/07/07) [SANDRA DAWES].

COUNTRY HIDEAWAY

This was our first time on Alberta Prairie in a decade, and while the simulated holdup still occurred just short of Big Valley, there were two major changes: • a stop at a camp ground a few minutes out of Stettler station to pick up of a handful of our overall 180 passengers; and • a chicken dinner on the way back at the railway's "Country Hideaway" at Warden, instead of the traditional roast beef at Big Valley. Featuring a large tent for the meal (along with various games for the young and not-so-young), Country Hideaway was located along the east side of the railway's Warden yard. Former CP 12 Section-1 Drawing Room Sleeper TRACY (1931) was not in the consist this day, but its old fleet mate, Lounge Sleeper GLEN SUTTON (1921), was. (It seemed to be acting as a crew relaxation car this day, although they welcomed us in for a look-see.) (*Note: Alberta Prairie has marked this tourist train variously as "Railway Excursions", "Steam Tours", "Steam Tour", and at the time of this trip, just "Railway"; for consistency with previous trips, "Railway Excursions" [APRE] is used here.*)

WARDEN JCT.

... briefly was a busy place back in the day, where the Canadian Northern (CNor) north-south main line between Camrose, Stettler, Big Valley and Drumheller was crossed by a line heading west to Sylvan Lake, Rocky Mountain House and Brazeau, and (later, in 1925 after CNor had become part of Canadian National) one southeast to Hanna. Involved in the hauling of coal as well as grain, these branches were abandoned, at least where Warden was concerned, in the 1970's and 1980's. On this day, Alberta Prairie was storing its rolling stock in the small yard, including former CN Mountain locomotive No. 6060 in a shed, its tender outside. (No. 6060 was sidelined back in 2010 when its boiler certificate expired, and was now undergoing an expensive overhaul.)



[Punched ticket issued for Alberta
Prairie excursion, 2023/0707]



2020's-35: An extended family boards No. 1 Canadian at Watrous for Saskatoon, along with the author for Edmonton (2023/07/18) [SANDRA DAWES].

- **12 JUL:** To **WATROUS** by car with Sandra to visit her Mom, my intention being to return to Edmonton on the train, spend a week or so there, then go back to pick up Sandra.

18 JUL:

VIA 1 [TORONTO] WATROUS-EDMONTON [VANCOUVER] Canadian

E	[2]	6448,6458
X		8615
C	[2]	8108,8117
CfeL		8507
S	[3]	Butler Manor,Abbot Manor, Draper Manor
CfeL		8516
D		Princess
S	[5]	Monck Manor,Laird Manor, Rogers Manor,Sherwood Manor, Bell Manor

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2023

CfeL	8504
D	Annapolis
S [2]	Château Cadillac, Château Jolliet
OLS	Kootenay Park

To **EDMONTON**, departing 0815 and arriving 2030 (*scheduled for 0754 and 2050, respectively*), including stops at Saskatoon, Biggar, Unity and Wainwright AB (home by taxi); * I occupied a seat in one of the two day Coaches; * 619 km in 12 hrs 15 mins, or 51 km/h (386 mls/31 mph); * No. 8108 (ex-CP, VIA 108).

BACK UP FRONT

The previous time I did this daytime run of the *Canadian* between Watrous and Edmonton, I booked an Upper Berth, paying more in order to get to use the Dining and PARK cars. No Uppers or Lowers apparently being available this time on a 19-car train, I went "Economy Class", with just heat-up food and refreshments in the Skyline Dome car. Coach No. 8108 sported a yellow stripe, apparently meant to match the new Venture corridor train sets. The two Coaches were perhaps two-thirds full, and I was able to get a nice window seat to myself – these being very comfortable with plenty of leg room, although some might find sleeping overnight in them another matter. There was a good representation of Indigenous folk, possibly because they no longer had Greyhound to ride. One sketchy looking Caucasian fellow parked himself in the back corner of the Dome and didn't move for the entire Watrous-Edmonton trip. At each servicing or crew change point, there was the usual stampede to disembark for a cigarette – but unlike some other trips, there was no smell of dope, on or off the train. (This was the first time I'd gone coach on the *Canadian* since 2008, when I returned from Jasper to Edmonton after taking VIA's short-lived, Edmonton-Jasper *Snow Train Express* in the other direction.)



*[From Economy Class menu on
the Canadian (2023/01)]*



2020's-36: Yellow-striped Economy Class Coach No. 8108 during servicing at Saskatoon, the smokers enjoying their latest break (2023/07/18) [PETER DAWES].

THE KIDS

There were a number of children in the Coaches, supervised to varying degrees by one or two parents. In fairness, going by train must be a challenge, especially to kids today with their multiple devices – whose use was limited on VIA. Unusually, as the photo two pages back shows, a group of seven youngsters boarded at Watrous with a couple of parent-chaperones, VIA having charged \$10 a head for the 75-minute trip into Saskatoon, where other parents met them for a car journey beyond. Most of those kids were well behaved, but two persisted in collapsing in the aisle and moaning, "This train is so slow, I'm going to die"!

THE 1, 2 EDMONTON SHUFFLE

This was another on time or nearly on time trip on a train where lateness was the rule, and No. 1 actually got through CN's Walker Yard and approached Edmonton station at 1940 hours, 70 minutes early – only to find No. 2 finishing its refuelling exercise before its 1950 departure for Toronto. After he departed 15 minutes later at 2005, we eased by, backed in and came to a final stop at 2030 – some 20 minutes early.

Toronto-Vancouver Menu

Snacks and light meals

Chips, Chocolate bars, Yogurt	— \$3
Cup of Soup, Oatmeal cup	— \$3 ⁵⁰
Cookies, Muffins, Cashews, Almonds, Hummus snack	— \$4
Hot breakfast sandwich, Hot breakfast wrap	— \$5
Hot breakfast meal	— \$8
Pizza submarine, Cheeseburger, Falafel wrap, Cheese plate, Assorted sandwiches	— \$9 ⁵⁰
Hot entree	— \$10

Beverages

Spring water	— \$2 ⁵⁰
Milk, Chocolate milk, Coffee, Tea, Hot chocolate, Soft drinks, Juices (orange, apple)	— \$3

Alcoholic beverages

Domestic beers, 355 ml	— \$8 ⁵⁰
Premium Canadian VQA red or white wine, 200 ml	— \$10
Liquors (mix included), 50 ml	
Craft beers, 473 ml	
Rémi Martin VSOP cognac, 50 ml	— \$15

Other

Blanket kit	— \$15
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Accepted forms of payment on board: Visa, MasterCard, American Express and cash.
We are unable to accept Debit, Prepaid Credit or Debit Credit Cards.
All sales taxes are included. Consumption of personal alcoholic beverages on these premises is prohibited by law.
Some menu items may contain nuts or traces of peanuts.
The VIA logo is a trademark owned by VIA Rail Canada Inc.



[Economy Class menu on the Canadian (2023/01)]

TORONTO-VANCOUVER MENU

Dispensed from Skyline car No. 8507, the Economy Class offerings were basic, ranging from a "Cup of Soup" to a "Hot Entree", although I confess that I did not try the latter. The turkey/cheese bagel, sold under "Assorted Sandwiches", was fresh and generously sized. The "Blanket Kit" was a throwback to ancient times when you could rent a pillow on overnight trains. (*Note: The small print of the menu reads: "Accepted forms of payment on board: Visa, Mastercard, American Express and cash. We are unable to accept Debit, Prepaid Credit or Debit Credit Cards. All sales taxes are included. Consumption of personal alcoholic beverages on these premises is prohibited by law. Some menu items may contain nuts or traces of peanuts. The VIA logo is trademark of VIA Rail Canada Inc.".)*)

25-26 JUL:

VIA 2 [VANCOUVER] EDMONTON-WATROUS [TORONTO] Canadian

E	[2]	6412,6452
X		8619
C	[2]	8119,8107
CfeL		8503
S	[3]	Bayfield Manor[dd],Fraser Manor, Elgin Manor
CfeL		8509
D		Palliser
S	[5]	Dunsmuir Manor, Thompson Manor , Brandt Manor,Cornwall Manor. Cabot Manor
CfeL		8500
D		Kent
S	[2]	Château Maisonneuve,Château Lauzon
OLS		Laurentide Park

Back to **WATROUS**, departing 1950 and arriving next morning 18 minutes early at 0808; * My access to

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2023

Edmonton station was by LRT downtown, then taxi, and I again occupied a Lower Berth in a MANOR car; * 619 km in 12 hrs 18 mins, or 50 km/h (386 mls/31 mph); * No. 8619 (*Budd/SPTA, 1963; ex-UP 5909, 903691*).

AN EARLY WATROUS ARRIVAL!

This No. 2 was another 19-car **Canadian**, arriving from Vancouver 20 minutes late at 1910, but departing right on time at 1950. Progress through Walker Yard was very slow, including an immediate back-up move to switch tracks to avoid a long container train. We did not cross the North Saskatchewan River bridge until 2120 – 90 minutes after departing from the station – encountering No. 1 shortly thereafter. This was the first time I had ever recorded General Motors F40PH No. 6452, and the first time for Dining car KENT since 1979. Baggage No. 8619 was not the usual ex-CP car, but rather an ex-Union Pacific unit. I awoke at 0515 as No. 2 was being serviced at Saskatoon, and had breakfast with an Englishman and a Scotsman travelling separately on their own, the former divorced, the later widowed – both intrigued by the idea of travelling across Canada by train.

NO CHANGE FEE

When I was forced to change my travel date, the VIA Moncton reservations people told me I would have to pay \$100 or so as a penalty. To my surprise, the clerk at the Edmonton station waived the fee entirely – and laughed when I said I would spend my windfall in the PARK car bar that very evening!

• **2 AUG:** Return to **EDMONTON** by car with Sandra.

26-27 AUG:

VIA 2 [VANCOUVER] EDMONTON-WATROUS [TORONTO] Canadian

E	[2]	6420,6458
X		8615
C	[2]	8108,8117
CfeL		8507
S	[3]	Butler Manor,Abbot Manor,

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2023

	Draper Manor
CfeL	8516
D	Princess
S [5]	Monck Manor, Laird Manor, Rogers Manor, Elgin Manor, Bell Manor
CfeL	8504
D	Emerald
S [2]	Château Cadillac, Château Joliet
OLS	Kootenay Park

Back again to **WATROUS**, this time with Sandra for the better part of a week, departing on time at 1950 and arriving next morning at 1014, 2 hours and 20 minutes late – stops including Biggar SK and Saskatoon; * We accessed the station by taxi, then occupied a Section in a MANOR car, and walked the 10 minutes to Sandra's Mom's place; * 619 km in 14 hrs 24 mins, or 43 km/h (386 mls/27mph).

A LATE WATROUS ARRIVAL!

This No. 2 was another 19-car **Canadian**, unusually starting from Edmonton due the previous evening's No. 1 being annulled and turned there due to serious wildfires in British Columbia. We were approximately 75 minutes late out of Saskatoon, and lost another hour getting to Watrous. When we boarded at around 1915, our Diner PRINCESS was closed, but VIA served tasty snacks and Champagne in our Skyline No. 8516, which quickly became a hub of activity. (No access was allowed back to KOOTENAY PARK, presumably because the Prestige guests were enjoying even better complimentary fare.) This consist was similar to my July 18th No. 1 from Watrous to Edmonton, the exceptions being that F40PH-3 6455 was replaced by 6448, Sleeper SHERWOOD MANOR by ELGIN MANOR, and rear Diner ANNAPOLIS by EMERALD. This was the first time I'd occupied BUTLER MANOR since way back in 1981, and our novice attendant was shaky on her train details, for example directing us back to the "Dome car" (OK), which apparently was next to the "Activity Wagon" (very British sounding).



2020's-37: Upper Berth 03U in BUTLER MANOR, VIA No. 2 *Canadian*, Edmonton to Watrous – a famous VIA Oreo cookie on the bed (2023/08/26) [SANDRA DAWES].

LITTLE ADVANCE NOTICE

Passengers had been given little advance notice that No. 2 would be cancelled out of Vancouver on July 25th, leaving many stranded there or in Jasper. VIA took no responsibility for finding alternative transportation to Edmonton, and tour operators struggled to deal with the situation. One American couple from New York state were able to fly to Calgary, then catch a bus north to the train. By luck, an Australian couple had visited Jasper station that morning, only to be told that there would be no train that day. They managed to get the last available rental car; drove the four hours or so to Edmonton (their first experience with driving on the right instead of left side of the highway as they do in their country); tried to find a drop-off location in Edmonton but couldn't; drove the 27 kilometres (17 miles) south to Edmonton International Airport and found an Avis desk; and finally got a cab which got them to the train within an hour of departure.

UNDERSTANDABLE BUT INEXCUSABLE TOO

Although understanding the emergency orders that led to the cancellation, passengers on VIA No. 2, the *Canadian*, ex-Vancouver on Aug. 25, 2023, were put under incredible stress by VIA's lack of advance notice and failure to assist in getting them to Edmonton. Of course, they also missed the key attraction of the entire Vancouver-Toronto train trip, the Canadian Rockies.

1 SEP:

VIA 1 [TORONTO] WATROUS-EDMONTON [VANCOUVER] *Canadian*

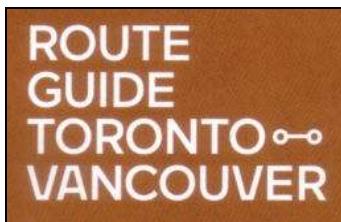
E	[2]	6455,6420
X		8615
C	[2]	8108 ,8117
CfeL		8507
S	[3]	Butler Manor,Abbot Manor, Draper Manor
CfeL		8516
D		Princess
S	[5]	Monck Manor,Laird Manor, Rogers Manor,Elgin Manor, Bell Manor
CfeL		8504
D		Emerald
S	[2]	Château Cadillac, Château Jolliet
OLS		Kootenay Park

Back home to **EDMONTON**, accessing the "Slab station" on foot, departing 41 minutes late at 0835, arriving 10 minutes early at 2040, stops including Saskatoon, Unity and Wainwright AB; * We occupied Coach No. 8108 with the yellow stripe, the same one I'd ridden back in July; * 619 km in 12 hrs 5 mins, or 51 km/h (386 mls/32mph).

A DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE

This No. 1 was almost identical to No. 2 of a week earlier, only one of the locomotives being different. The two Coaches were perhaps two-thirds full of all sorts of characters, including:

- a grandmother giving two grandchildren a taste of train travel from Saskatoon to Unity SK (\$8 for each child);
- a 40-ish woman who was ticketed to Edmonton but asked us if the train might somehow be going beyond to Grande Prairie AB, her destination (not even close, GP being way up in Peace Country; she had no clue as to how to get from Edmonton to GP; and later, over her phone, told the guy she was going to visit in GP that it was “all over” with him before she even got there!);
- a strange looking man in the seat behind us who was fast asleep (his phone blaring out an on-hold message for a long time before Sandra gave him the “stink eye”);
- a young couple with a small bull terrier at their feet (apparently, the rules concerning “service dogs” were being relaxed on VIA as well as the airlines, but at least this canine was very well trained);
- a large fellow who phoned his parole officer in Vancouver (apparently to determine how he should turn himself in upon arrival);
- two very smart young ladies, circa 10 years old, who spent the entire day playing cards in the dome (sometimes with older, equally bored passengers);
- an older “train-bore” who had an opinion about everything (he had people scurrying for cover whenever he showed up, even the two young ladies); and
- a former head of the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta (who had been in a car accident near Sudbury ON and decided to train it all the way back to Edmonton; we had a mutual friend I’d encountered while working for the Government of Alberta). All in all, a much more interesting trip than my earlier July adventure in Economy, but more amusing and entertaining than threatening or annoying.



[From VIA Route Guide, Toronto-Vancouver, 2017]

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2023



2020's-38: VIA No. 1 Canadian pulling into Watrous,
circa 0830 (2023/09/01) [SANDRA DAWES].

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2024

2024

*ALBERTA/SASKATCHEWAN
MANITOBA/BRITISH COLUMBIA
ONTARIO/QUÉBEC/NORTH-
EASTERN, NORTHWESTERN
& MIDWESTERN US.*



[Cover of 2024 brochure]

SYNOPSIS

I travelled by train in 2024 to visit family and friends in Saskatchewan, back east in Ontario and Québec, and in California, and took a tourist train in Québec. The above *Train de Charlevoix* brochure cover shows the train on its Québec-Baie-SaintPaul run.

Trips taken: Twenty-one trips were involved covering 16,196 kilometres (*10,108 miles*), 11 by VIA, 8 by Amtrak, and 2 by Train de Charlevoix (TC). Sixteen were in my “Coach” category, the other 5 in “Sleeper”. Two were on self-propelled trains; none behind steam.

Equipment units: 196, made up of 28 Locomotives & Related Units and 168 cars (Coaches & Daynitors, 65; Parlor & Club Cars, 14; Sleeping & Business Cars, 49; Dining & Other Meal Cars, 12; Lounge Cars, 21; Baggage & Miscellaneous Cars, 7).

Places visited in Canada: **BC** – Vancouver; **ON** – Kingston, Ottawa, Picton* and Toronto; **QC** – Baie-Saint-Paul; Montréal and Québec City. **In the United States:** **CA** – Emeryville, Sacramento and San Francisco*; **CO** – Denver; **MA** – Boston; **NY** – Albany and New York **OR** – Portland. (**Note:** * indicates by non-rail means.)

Noteworthy train trips: **AM California Zephyr**, Sacramento to Denver; **AM Coast Starlight**, Portland to Emeryville; **VIA Canadian**, Edmonton to Toronto & Edmonton to Vancouver; **TC Train de Charlevoix**, Québec to Baie-Saint-Paul.

Fastest average speed by a Canadian Service Provider: **VIA Bonaventure**, Montréal to Toronto & **Renaissance**, Kingston to Montréal: 99 km/h (62 mph). **American:** **AM Northeast Regional**, New York to Boston: 86 km/h (54 mph).

Slowest average speed by a Canadian Service Provider: **VIA Canadian**, Edmonton to Vancouver: 36 km/h (23 mph). **American:** **AM Adirondack**, Albany to Montréal: 43 km/h (27 mph).

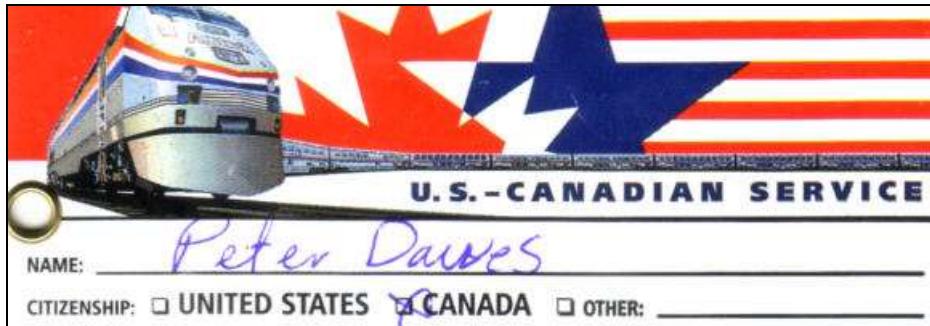
NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2024

HIGHLIGHT

Riding Amtrak's *California Zephyr* from Sacramento to Denver, over the truly scenic High Sierras, across the Nevada desert, and through the canyons of the Colorado Rockies down into Denver, with interesting fellow passengers and mostly good crew.

MILESTONE

Taking VIA's *Canadian* from Edmonton to Vancouver, slowly passing through, without stopping, at the partly burned-out mountain town of Jasper, the wildfire fortunately having spared the old Canadian National station, but VIA's servicing being performed near Hinton, the first town to the east.



[Amtrak baggage check for cross-border services (2024)]



[From an Amtrak card promoting its Portland OR station lounge (2024)]

TRIPS AND CONSISTS

4-7 MAY:

VIA 2 [VANCOUVER] EDMONTON-TORONTO *Canadian*

E	[3]	6418,6452,6434
X		8613
C	[2]	8117,8132
CfeL		8507
S	[3]	Rogers Manor, Hunter Manor, Brant Manor
CfeL		8517
D		Princess
S	[6]	Amherst Manor, Carleton Manor , Hearne Manor, Mackenzie Manor, Dunsmuir Manor, Grant Manor
CfeL		8503
D		Emerald
S	[2]	Château Lauzon, Château Varennes
OLS		Kootenay Park

To **TORONTO** with Sandra, departing at 0140 and arriving Union Station two days later at 1605 (scheduled for 1950 the evening before and 1429, respectively), at the start of a trip taking in New York, Boston, Albany, Montréal, Ottawa, Kingston, Québec and Baie-St-Paul (access to station by taxi); * Included on No. 2 were stops at Wainwright, Biggar SK, Saskatoon, Melville and Winnipeg MB, Sioux Lookout ON, Hornepayne, Capreol and Washago, behind three instead of the usual two General Motors F40PH-3's; * We occupied a Section in a MANOR car; * By Toronto Transit Commission's Yonge Street subway to the Pantages Hotel, near Dundas Station, for one night; * 3,221 km in 60 hrs 25 mins, or 53 km/h (2,010 mls/33 mph); * Nos. 6418, 6434, 6452 (GMD, 1986-9); * Nos. 8613 (ex-CP 3013, CP/VIA 613), 8117 (ex-CP/VIA 117) 8507 (ex-CP/VIA CfLC 507); CARLETON MANOR (3sc4rm5db1ct), PRINCESS (all Budd/AMFT, 1954-5; ex-CP); * No. 8132 (ex-NYC/PC 2913; AM/CR 5649) (Budd/AMFT, 1946); * CHÂTEAU LAUZON (6de), KOOTENAY PARK (1de1di) (Budd/AMFT/ARI/JRS, 1954-5; ex-CP).



2020's-39: View from KOOTENAY PARK on No. 2 Canadian, near the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border (2024/05/05) [SANDRA DAWES].

BLOGGING AND SKINNY DIPPING

This 20-car *Canadian* was 6½ hours late into Edmonton, meaning we didn't leave until 0140 hours. By the time we reached Toronto, we were only 1½ hours late – an indication of the schedule's generous padding. As always, the people were interesting: • the Australian woman who was blogging her way around the world; • the woman from the Coaches who skinny dipped in an adjacent (and still very cold) lake while No. 2 paused for servicing at Capreol; • the autistic young fellow with his parents who boarded somewhere in northern Ontario and apparently loved rail travel; and • the Californian fellow who (with other Aussies) had taken Princess Cruises' GRAND PRINCESS up from San Francisco to Vancouver before transferring to the *Canadian* for the long ride across Canada.



[From VIA Route Guide, Toronto-Vancouver, 2017]



2020's-40: VIA information display for *Maple Leaf*, Toronto Union Station, (2024/05/05) [SANDRA DAWES].

8 MAY:**VIA 97-AM 64 TORONTO-NEW YORK *Maple Leaf***

E	104	TORONTO-ALBANY
Eed	713	ALBANY-NEW YORK
C [4]	25105,82573,82987,82698	
KDn	48190	

Depart Union Station 0820, arrive on time at 2116, stopping at Oakville, Aldershot, St. Catharines, Niagara Falls ON & NY, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Rome, Utica, Amsterdam, Schenectady, Albany-Rensselaer, Hudson, Rhinecliff, Poughkeepsie and Croton-Harmon – behind a General Electric Genesis P42DC as far as Albany-Rensselaer and dual-mode P32ACDM onward to permit access into Penn Station [**all equipment AM**]; * We occupied seats in Amfleet I Coaches (one as far as Niagara Falls NY; another one after), utilizing the Club Dinette for food and drink; * By Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) lines 3 & 7 to Grand Central Terminal, and three nights at the nearby Gotham Hotel; * 875 km in 12 hrs 56 mins, or 68 km/h (545 mls/42 mph); * Nos. 104 (2000-1), 713 (1998) (both GE); * No. 25105 (Budd, 1981); * Nos. 82573 (ex-21145, 44145), 82987 (ex-20029, 20041), 48190 (ex-C 28362, KDn 20050, K 48968) (Budd, 1975-7).

MAPLE LEAF

... consisted of Amtrak equipment but was operated by VIA within Canada over Canadian National. Arrival at Niagara Falls NY was at 1140, departure at 1225, passengers being required to disembark, with their baggage, for immigration and customs purposes – a burden for those with limited mobility. From there, the train ran over CSX Corp. rails as far as Poughkeepsie NY, Metro-North to Yonkers, and Amtrak itself into Penn Station. Starting with Buffalo, *Maple Leaf* continued to fill up all the way to New York. As always has been the case, the almost 13-hour schedule made the train uncompetitive with other modes of transport, especially given the procedure at Niagara Falls NY. (**Note:** *The U.S. border police sent three passengers back to Canada after they'd missed disembarking at the Niagara Falls ON stop – apparently, a common occurrence.*)



2020's-41: Dual-mode P32ACDM 713 backing onto Amtrak No. 64 *Maple Leaf* at Albany-Rensselaer, for the run south to New York (2024/05/05) [PETER DAWES].

THOSE LEXAN WINDOWS!

Annoyingly, Amtrak put New York-bound passengers in 84-passenger Amfleet I cars instead of the 60-seat Amfleet II version. Worse, our car ran hot most of the way to Albany-Rensselaer. Finally, a complaint that goes back as far as the author has ridden these cars: the smallish, dirty, scratched-up, plastic Lexan windows.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK!

Having previously done the obvious attractions such as Staten Island and the High Line walking trail along the west side, we made entertainment the focus of our visit, highlights being the Birdland Jazz Club (where we heard top New York musicians play New Orleans jazz in an innovative way) and the Broadway play, *Book of Mormon*. We also visited Roosevelt Island, located in the middle of the East River and featuring expensive housing but also cultural and recreational opportunities. In getting around, we used the 2, 3, 5, F and S subway lines, the latter being the Grand Central Terminal-Times Square shuttle



2020's-42: Moynihan Train Hall, Penn Station, New York (2024/05/11) [SANDRA DAWES].

ON BROADWAY

The *Book of Mormon* came about because of our young New Yorker friend, August, encountered on the *Canadian* two years ago. Turns out his mother was a “dresser” on the play, one of the crew that prepares the clothing for each show and makes certain each actor has the correct gear when it comes time to switch costumes, sometimes frantically. Before and after she gave us a wonderful tour of the Eugene O'Neill Theatre's cramped backstage quarters, August showed us around the Broadway and Times Square area.

MOYNIHAN TRAIN HALL

... was opened in 2021 on the site of the former main post office building in New York, in order to ease congestion in Penn Station. Named after the late Massachusetts Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who championed the project for many years, the hall provides access to all tracks used by Amtrak and the Long Island railroad, while New Jersey Transit passengers continue to use Penn Station proper.



2020's-43: Amtrak's *Northeast Regional* No. 162 newly arrived at South Station, Boston (2024/05/11) [SANDRA DAWES].

11 MAY:

AM 162 [WASHINGTON] NEW YORK- BOSTON *Northeast Regional*

Ee	622
C	[5] 82533,82582, 82619 ,82646,
	82593
Cfe	43383
C	[2] 82615,82568
K	81543

Depart Penn Station at 1005, arrive South Station at 1427, approximately five minutes late at either end, including stops at Stamford CT, Bridgeport, New Haven, New London, Providence RI and Back Bay MA – behind a Siemens ACS-64 electric locomotive; * We occupied seats in an Amfleet I Coach, utilizing the Café for food and drink; * By Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Red & Orange lines to Back Bay, and three nights at Copley House Apartments; * 375 km in 4 hrs 22 mins, or 86 km/h (231 mls/54 mph); * No. 622 (*Siemens*, 2013-6); * Nos. 82619 (ex-21252), 81543 (ex-44790), 43383 (ex-28354) (*Budd*, 1975-7).



2020's-44: MBTA Red Line train at South Station,
Boston (2024/05/14) [SANDRA DAWES].

NORTHEAST REGIONAL

... was one of several operated in Amtrak's Northeast Corridor to serve intermediate points. We went from New York to Boston for only \$40 Cdn. each, whereas an *Acela* express would have cost over \$150 each. The train was all-Amfleet, trailed by a Dinette, the Coaches of the Amfleet II, 84-seat type. We could have disembarked at Back Bay, Boston, where our accommodation was located, but went right into South Station instead, both to get a photo of the train and to try out MBTA transit for future trips within the city.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

I'd only been to Boston once before, way back in 1975 with Greg Thompson. Our *Minute Man* was equipped with then-new Amfleet cars and required a change from electric to diesel-electric locomotives at New Haven CT – electrification between there and Boston not to be completed until the year 2000. Our return trip to New York was on the Turboliner-equipped *Flying Yankee*. Amfleet cars still were mainstays on Amtrak's *Northeast Regionals* in 2024, a mere 49 years later!

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2024



2020's-45: Fenway Park, home of Red Sox, from Prudential Tower, Back Bay (2024/05/12) [SANDRA DAWES].

BACK BAY AND MORE

Highlights of our three day visit to Boston included an excellent guided tour of the compact Boston downtown, followed by historic Charlestown (later called Boston) Naval Yard, which featured the preserved U.S.S. CONSTITUTION, built in 1797 and better known as "Old Ironsides". (We made good use of the MBTA's Green and Orange lines on this outing.) Back Bay itself boasted many historic buildings, including the Boston Public Library dating from 1895. The observation deck of the 52-floor Prudential Tower building allowed great views of the city, including historic Fenway Park, home of the Boston Red Sox baseball team. We would meet up with our old Edmonton friend Russ Sampson to watch the Sox defeat the Washington Nationals 3-2 on a beautiful Sunday afternoon, in a proper outdoor ball park, not a concrete mausoleum like the Blue Jays' Rogers Centre. (*Note: Washington Nationals were the relocated Montréal Expos, moved there, via Florida, by the National League in 2005.*)



[From Fenway Park sign] [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_Nationals] [logoserver.com]

14 MAY:

AM 449 BOSTON-ALBANY [CHICAGO] Lakeshore Limited

E [2] 111,108

S Rivanna River

Cfe 28014

C [2] **25083,82503**

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2024



2020's-46: Boston South Station, *Lakeshore* tucked in amongst Northeast Corridor & suburban departures (2024/05/14) [PETER DAWES].

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2024

Depart South Station at 1250, arrive Albany-Rensselaer 15 minutes early at 1755, stopping at Framingham, Worcester, Springfield and Pittsfield, accessing the station by Orange & Red lines; * Power was provided by two General Electric Genesis P42DC's, and we occupied seats in a roomy Amfleet II Coach; * By taxi through a maze of freeways and over a bridge spanning the Hudson River (one night at Fairfield Inn, downtown Albany); * 325 km in 4 hrs 22 mins, or 64 km/h (200 mls/40 mph); No. 28014 (Budd, 1975-7); * RIVANNA RIVER (11rm2br1di) (CAF, 2021).

LAKESHORE LIMITED

This was the Boston section of this train, joined at Albany-Rensselaer by a longer New York section for the run west to Chicago. The train ran over CSX, following the old Boston & Albany Railroad, a New York Central subsidiary. Our train featured just one Amfleet I Coach, one Amfleet II Coach (ours), a "Diner Lite" (which was more like a Café), a Viewliner II Sleeping car, and two Genesis diesel-electrics. Some observations: • lightly loaded this day, but bolstered by perhaps a dozen Amish or similarly clothed people of all generations heading somewhere west; • lots of instructions by the male Conductor, mainly about what the passengers were *not* allowed to do; • a grumpy female attendant in the Café car; • freezing temperatures in our Coach; • only one freight and the eastbound *Lakeshore* encountered, once beyond the Boston commuter zone; and • both locomotives carrying on to Chicago (the New York section being powered by a dual-mode P32ACDM as far as Albany).

RIVANNA RIVER

... was part of a second order of 25 Viewliner Sleeping cars, built by Construcciones y Auxiliar de Ferrocarriles USA, the first order having been for 50. The Viewliner program was aimed at serving New York and other places where clearances would not permit Superliner cars. The first phase involved only Sleepers, the second also Diners, Baggage and Baggage-Dormitories. The first phase Sleepers were configured for 12 "Roomettes" (each with two berths), two "deluxe" Bedrooms and one accessible deluxe Bedroom (each room type having two berths). It was the same for the second phase, except one less "Roomette".



2020's-47: Amtrak No. 68 Adirondack ready to depart Albany-Rensselaer for Montréal (2024/05/15) [PETER DAWES].

15 MAY:

AM 68 [NEW YORK] ALBANY-MONTRÉAL Adirondack

E	121
C	[2] 25106, 25118 , 82503
Cfe	43350
C	[2] 25091, 25024

Depart Albany-Rensselaer on time at 1140 (having accessed the station in perhaps the dirtiest cab ever encountered), arrive Central Station only 24 minutes late at 2040, including stops at Schenectady, Saratoga Springs, Whitehall, Westport and Plattsburgh; * Power was by another P42DC, and we again occupied seats in an Amfleet II Coach; * We walked down the hill to our Hotel Griffintown (home for four nights); * 390 km in 9 hrs, or 43 km/h (240 mls/27 mph).



[From Amtrak baggage tag, 2024]

ADIRONDACK

This was our latest adventure on this frustrating train, our late arrival caused this time by the Canadian border authorities who took fully two hours to check, according to the Conductor, all of 56 passengers. He also mentioned that the train soon would be cancelled for five weeks from May 20th, due to Canadian National (CN) planning to upgrade the slow and bumpy 68 kilometres (42 miles) from the border through St-Jean up to the main line near St-Lambert. The matter had come to a head in 2023, when CN imposed speed restrictions on the already painfully slow train due to "sun kinks", causing Amtrak to cancel the train from June to September. Although CN's Amtrak-funded improvement program was expected to improve things somewhat, *Adirondack* would remain a slow experience, only partly offset by the beautiful scenery provided alongside Lake Champlain. (*Note: Although Maple Leaf was partly funded by the Canadian government due to VIA's involvement on the Toronto-Niagara Falls segment, Adirondack was entirely Amtrak's responsibility, and sustained by subsidies provided by the State of New York.*)

MONTRÉAL ROUNDS

We did the usual rounds in Montréal, spending:

- Thursday evening with nephew Charlie, Meghan and kids (access by Réseau de transport Métropolitain Métro);
- Friday evening with sister Dorothy and family members in Brossard (our first trips on the Réseau express métropolitain [REM] light-rail line, affording vast panoramas of the city from the right-of-way located atop the Champlain Bridge); and
- Saturday with buddy Shaun, the highlight being a journey all the way from sea level at the Old Port up to the lookout on top of Mount Royal (a brisk walk on a beautiful afternoon).



[Montréal Métro 2-trip ticket, 2024]



2020's-48: REM (Réseau express métropolitain) train descending to cross the Lachine Canal on its way into Central Station (2024/05/16) [SANDRA DAWES].

TOUR DU PORT DU MONTRÉAL

Shaun took us to the recently opened observation tower located on the outer end of the old Alexandra Pier, with Holland-America's VOLENDAM berthed alongside. Measuring 61,000 Gross Registered Tonnes and 237 metres (778 feet) in length, she was a sister ship of the ZAANDAM that we took from Vancouver to Alaska in 2018. (We had reconnected with ZAANDAM in 2023 when she visited Québec on her way up the St. Lawrence to Montréal.) Alexandra Pier was special to the author because, as a child in 1956, he saw off his grandmother to England on Cunard Line's CARINTHIA, and was there again when she returned on ASCANIA. As for the tower, it afforded great views of the port and the city – well worth a visit.



[From Tour admission receipt, 2024]



2020's-49: Holland-America's VOLENDAM, tied up at Montréal's cruise terminal, the new Observation tower behind (2024/05/18) [SANDRA DAWES].

19 MAY:

VIA 633 MONTRÉAL-OTTAWA

CabC	2311
C	[2] 2811,2911
K	[2] 2711,2611
E	2210

To **FALLOWFIELD** via Ottawa station on the first leg of a journey taking us to Kingston and Québec City; * Depart Central Station at 0900, arrive 16 minutes late at 1120, with stops at Dorval, Alexandria and Casselman, occupying the Cab Coach in a Venture train set led by a Charger locomotive; * 187 km in 2 hrs 16 mins, or 82 km/h (117 mls/51 mph); * All SMS 2021.

VIA 53 OTTAWA-FALLOWFIELD [TORONTO]

E	6432
K	3474
C	[4] 3307,3361,3311,4111



2020's-50: Venture Cab Coach 2311 ready to leave Montréal Central Station for Ottawa, heading VIA No. 633 (2024/05/19) [PETER DAWES].

Depart at 1148, arrive on time at 1205, non-stop, occupying an LRC Coach; * One night courtesy of cousin Sue and Russ; * 16 km in 17 mins, or 59 km/h (10 mls/37 mph); * Nos. 3307, 3474 (ex-C 3398) (BBD, 1981-4); * No. 4111 (Budd/AMFT, 1949, ex-SOU 951, AM 3851, possibly dead-heading this day).

MONTRÉAL TO FALLOWFIELD

... required us to take a Venture train set as far as Ottawa, then a Toronto-bound mostly LRC (Light-Rapid-Comfortable) train beyond. In No. 633, our Cab Coach attendant was particularly diligent in his safety instructions, and in requiring overhead luggage to be properly placed in the open bins. Having one half of the seats facing forwards and the other backwards can be annoying, and the placement of our backwards seats was right between the two windows, leaving scant room to look out. Our late arrival on No. 633 was due in part to having to take the siding for Montréal & Québec-bound No. 24, just outside of Ottawa. No. 53 gave us the familiarity of a mostly vintage, Toronto-bound LRC train to Fallowfield station in Barrhaven, convenient for Sue and Russ to meet us.

20 MAY:

VIA 59 [OTTAWA] FALLOWFIELD-KINGSTON [TORONTO]

E	918
K	3475
C	[3] 3351,3364,3316

To **KINGSTON**, departing 1809, arriving 37 minutes late at 2016, including stops at Smiths Falls and Brockville, behind a Genesis P42DC and in an LRC Coach; * By taxi to the Hochelaga Inn, our home for four nights; * 175 km in 2 hrs 7 mins, or 83 km/h (288 mls/52 mph).

FALLOWFIELD TO KINGSTON

... was on our old favourite No. 59, which we'd used through to Toronto in both 2022 and 2023. We waited five minutes at VIA's Smiths Falls before being allowed to cross the Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC) main line, then the better part of 20 minutes just before Brockville station. According to the Service Director, this was to allow Montréal-Toronto No. 69 to clear first. (*Note: CP had recently taken over Kansas City Southern Railway and holding company, and was now styling itself as CPKC.*)

• **22 MAY:** To **Picton** by rental car to visit niece Andrea and family; • **23 MAY:** To **14 Island Lake**, north of Kingston, again by rental car, to attend a family gathering featuring my sister Dorothy, brother Raymond and Mary-Rose, at other-brother David and Tani's cabin.

A NEW HOME

In addition to the family gatherings, the main Kingston attraction this time was the ex-Canadian Pacific lake steamer KEEWATIN, which we had visited at her former location at Port McNicoll ON in 2017. The ship had been built on the Clyde in 1907 and was disassembled to fit through the St. Lawrence canals, then put back together for what turned out to be a 58-year career operating between Owen Sound (later Port McNicholl) and Fort William at the other end of Lake Superior. When the developer of adjacent properties went bankrupt, the owner of the museum ship donated her to the Maritime Museum of the Great Lakes in Kingston, which could accommodate her in its adjacent decommissioned dry dock.

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2020's-51: Former Canadian Pacific steamship KEEWATIN, Maritime Museum of the Great Lakes, Kingston (2024/05/21) [PETER DAWES].

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2024



2020's-52: Battered veteran General Electric Genesis P42DC 907 heading Montréal-bound VIA No. 64, Kingston ON (2024/05/24) [SANDRA DAWES].

24 MAY:

VIA 64 [TORONTO] KINGSTON-MONTRÉAL Renaissance

E	907
K	[2] 3469,3476
C	[5] 3359,3300,3362,3358 3306

To **QUÉBEC** via Montréal, departing on time at 1405, arriving Central Station a few minutes early at 1658, including stops at Brockville, Cornwall and Dorval; * 285 km in 2 hrs 53 mins, or 99 km/h (178 mls/62 mph).

VIA 28 [OTTAWA] MONTRÉAL-QUÉBEC

E	6436
X	7008
K	7221
SvL	7307
K	70111
C	[3] 70211,7100,7200

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2024

Depart 33 minutes late at 1858, arrive Gare du Palais 55 minutes behind schedule at 2250, including stops at St-Lambert, St-Hyacinthe, Drummondville, Charny and Ste-Foy, occupying a Coach in this Renaissance train; * Four nights at Hôtel Clarendon, after a quick, late evening taxi ride; * 272 km in 3 hrs 52 mins, or 70 km/h (170 mls/44 mph); * No. 7100 & all other cars (MC, 1995-6); * No. 70111 possibly in Coach service.

KINGSTON TO QUÉBEC

...involved No. 64 into Montréal (arriving a few minutes early; Dorothy accompanying us as far as Cornwall where she would visit daughter Alida and family) and No. 28 onward (half an hour late departing Central Station due to a late arrival from Ottawa; almost an hour late into Gare du Palais). The former train consisted of LRC cars, the latter Renaissance – both slated for replacement by the Venture trainsets. On No. 64, train crews informed those passengers changing in Central Station to No. 14 *Ocean* for Halifax and intermediate points, that their bags would be transferred directly. On No. 28, we occupied the rear seats of car 7100 in this British-built equipment, left side and at floor level – not elevated as the other seats were, (somewhat claustrophobic, but nice riding).

THROUGH TRAIN DOWNSIDE

Late running on the through Ottawa-Québec & vice versa trains apparently continued to result in delayed arrivals at either destination. Furthermore, in the case of our No. 28, using Renaissance equipment instead of the new Venture train sets required a back-up move out of Central Station as there was no Control cab car at the other end – this stretching a half-hour delay at the beginning into almost an hour by the time we reached Québec.

ENJOYING QUÉBEC AS USUAL

Our return to Québec for the third year running involved everything from a visit to the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec to the greenery of the Plains of Abraham, the artsy rue St-Jacques, the Lévis ferry with its spectacular views of the city – even a strenuous walk up and through the streets of Lévis.



2020's-53: *Le Train de Charlevoix* at Baie-Saint-Paul, just in from La Malbaie & ready to return to Chute-Montmorency station, Québec (2024/05/27) [PETER DAWES].

27 MAY:

RC QUÉBEC-BAIE SAINT PAUL [LA MALBAIE] & RETURN *Train de Charlevoix*

Cd [2] 1034,1031

To **BAIE-SAINT-PAUL** on a day excursion operated by Réseau Charlevoix, departing Parc de la Chute-Montmorency at 0900 (after a taxi ride from our hotel), arriving 1100 non-stop; * Returning, depart 1500, arrive 1700, again by taxi, back to the hotel; * 88 km in 2 hrs, or 44 km/h (54 mls/27 mph); * Nos. 1034, 1031
(DWU, 1981-2, ex-DB 928 103-4, 628 103-1)

TRAIN DE CHARLEVOIX

This was our second excursion over the Chute Montmorency-Baie Saint Paul segment, the first occurring back in 2012 over the entire route to and from La Malbaie. Owned and operated by Réseau Charlevoix, our train consisted of two Class 628.1 diesel-electric railcars built in Germany by Düewag & Waggon Union, and once operated by the Deutsche Bundesbahn (later called just Deutsche Bahn).



2020's-54: The St. Lawrence from *Train de Charlevoix* (2024/05/27) [SANDRA DAWES].

THE DINNER TRAIN

Operated by Le Massif de Charlevoix, the previous service was a full dinner train consisting of rebuilt former commuter bi-level cars powered by two diesel-electrics, supported by an electrical generator car. From my review of that 2012 excursion: “[T]he scenery was truly spectacular, the Baie-Saint-Paul stopover most enjoyable, the food a gastronomic experience (despite being prepared off-board and finished in the galley), and the service top notch” [*No Matter Where It's Going: 2010's*, 81]. This time, there was cart service offering snacks and drinks, and one could pre-order substantial lunches consisting mainly of local cheeses and cured meats. As for the weather, it was rainy and not much was open in the town because the tourist season was just beginning.



[Cover of 2024 brochure]



2020's-55: Charger locomotive 2209 on the rear of VIA's Montréal-bound No. 35, Gare du Palais, Québec (2024/05/28) [PETER DAWES].

28 MAY:

VIA 35 QUÉBEC-MONTRÉAL [OTTAWA]

CabC	2308
C	[2] 2808 ,2908
K	[2] 2708,2608
E	2209

To **TORONTO** via Montréal, departing Gare du Palais at 0806, arriving Central Station 26 minutes late at 1152, making stops at Ste-Foy, Charny, Drummondville, St-Hyacinthe and St-Lambert; * We occupied Coach seats in another Venture train set; * 272 km in 3 hrs 46 mins, or 72 km/h (170 mls/45 mph).

VIA 69 MONTRÉAL-TORONTO Bonaventure

E	903
K	[2] 3463 ,3473
C	[4] 3320,3327,3313,3354

Depart seven minutes late at 1705, arrive 30 minutes behind at 2233, stopping at Dorval, Cornwall, Brockville, Kingston, Oshawa and Guildwood; * We occupied one of two Business Class cars in an LRC

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consist; * By subway to Pantages Hotel for one night; * 539 km in 5 hrs 28 mins, or 99 km/h (336 mls/61 mph).

QUÉBEC TO TORONTO

We originally were booked in Business Class on No. 37 out of Québec, but previous experience and observations of late running by Québec-Ottawa trains persuaded me to book the earlier No. 35, but just go Economy Class. (We retained our Montréal-Toronto booking on No. 69, in Business.) When re-booking, the VIA agent suggested we use some of our Preference points, so we ended up paying for only the taxes. As it turned out, No. 37 was close to on time, and made the connection with No. 69, but we enjoyed our time in Montréal to visit the Jardin Nelson for some mid-day background jazz, and meet up with Shaun at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel for coffee and dessert.

CORRIDOR ENCOUNTERS

No. 35 probably gathered half of its initial passengers at suburban Ste-Foy, and at Charny just across the Québec Bridge. We again drew the short straw and ended up sitting backwards with a limited view outside. On No. 69, there were two Business cars in service, and ours suffered from a bossy attendant. When one passenger asked for water, she replied, "That cart already went by you; you missed it". When someone else asked for coffee, she barked, "I can't do everything at the same time". And this was in pricey Business Class! In general, VIA staff we encountered on Corridor trains were good to excellent, but some were unhelpful, rude, or overly fussy where taking photos before departure was concerned.



[“Union Station” clock, VIA Business lounge,
Toronto (2024)] [SANDRA DAWES].

29-31 MAY:

VIA 1 TORONTO-EDMONTON [VANCOUVER] Canadian

E	[2]	6441,6418
X		8613
C	[2]	8117,8132
CfeL		8503
S	[3]	Rogers Manor,Hunter Manor, Brant Manor
CfeL		8517
D		Princess
S	[6]	Amherst Manor,Wolfe Manor, Hearne Manor,Mackenzie Manor, Dunsmuir Manor, Grant Manor
CfeL		8507
D		Emerald
S	[2]	Château Lauzon,Château Varennes
OLS		Kootenay Park

Back home to **EDMONTON**, departing at 0955 (after a subway ride from our hotel to Union Station) and arriving three evenings later, 10 minutes ahead of schedule at 2040 (home by taxi); * We again occupied a Section in a MANOR car; * 3,221 km in 60 hrs 45 mins, or 53 km/h (2,010 mls/34 mph).

BACK HOME ON THE CANADIAN!

With several exceptions, our 20-car No. 1 had the same consist as eastbound counterpart No. 2 at the start of our trip: • the three Skyline “Activity” cars were the same but shuffled around; • CARLETON MANOR was replaced by WOLFE MANOR; and • there was no third locomotive, but No. 6452 was replaced by 6441. This was my first time occupying GRANT MANOR, although I'd recorded this Sleeper 13 times beginning in 1974. Time keeping was typical, despite running a couple of hours late at some points along the way, including into Winnipeg.



2020's-56: "Sail away" time on the *Canadian* departing Toronto, in the dome of "Activity car" 8507 (2024/05/29) [SANDRA DAWES].

THE GOOD AND THE BAD

Some positive observations: • the vast majority of staff were excellent, both before and after the crew change at Winnipeg; • several actually encouraged we ordinary Sleeping car passengers to visit the rear observation-dome car KOOTENAY PARK, after the usual, allowed time of 1600 hours. Fellow passengers included: • a retired couple from Buffalo NY who were big sports fans (including of the hockey Sabres); • an English bloke from Coventry (who, as a retired train driver, was amazed by the prodigious length of the freight trains passing by); • the usual several friendly Aussies; and • a lady travelling with her "emotional support" dog (which lay beneath our table during one dinner and never once begged for food). A couple of negatives: • the Coach attendant who would not allow me to go up past the Baggage car to take a photo before our initial departure from Toronto Union, despite there being no servicing going on, and fully 20 minutes before departure; and • the bug-splattered front windows of the dome in Car 8507 before we even left Toronto.

LUCKY US

Our fellow passengers continuing beyond Edmonton were in for a serious disruption when, having left around midnight, No. 1 encountered a CN freight derailment near Hinton AB in the early morning hours. After the train sat there for the rest of the night and much of the subsequent day, VIA decided to bus passengers around the derailment to Jasper, where those continuing west boarded No. 2, which had been turned around and would go back to Vancouver. As for our No. 1, it backed all the way to Edmonton, was turned there, and ultimately headed east as No. 2. (**Note:** *This is why one should never plan connections or activities on the day of this train's arrival, whether it be either in Toronto, Vancouver or other places.*)

- **8 JUL:** To **WATROUS** by car with Sandra to visit her Mom, via Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park SK, my intention being to return to Edmonton on the train, spend a week or so there, then go back to pick up Sandra.

16 JUL:

VIA 1 [TORONTO] WATROUS-EDMONTON [VANCOUVER] Canadian

E	[2]	6446,6413
X		8608
C	[2]	8112, 8108
CfeL		8501
S	[3]	Bell Manor,Mackenzie Manor, Monck Manor
CfeL		8509
D		York
S	[6]	Elgin Manor,Franklin Manor, Carleton Manor,Laird Manor, Bayfield Manor,Abbot Manor
CfeL		8500
D		Frontenac
S	[2]	Château Denonville,

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Château Joliet
OLS Laurentide Park

To **EDMONTON**, departing 1130 and arriving 2230 (*scheduled for 0754 and 2050, respectively*), including stops at Saskatoon and Wainwright AB (home by taxi); * I occupied a seat in one of the two day Coaches; * 619 km in 11 hrs, or 56 km/h (386 mls/35 mph); * No. 8108 (ex-CP, VIA 108).

A LONG DAY TRIP

This 20-car No. 1 was over three hours late into Watrous, but only 1 hour 40 minutes behind by the time it came to rest at Edmonton station. A family of four joined me in boarding at "The Slab", but caused the crew great consternation by showing up five minutes *after* the late train arrived. (Luckily for them, the train sat for half an hour, waiting there for a massive CN container job, every car featuring two of the boxes.) I travelled Economy Class on this long day trip, the two Coaches well-filled with families including young children, two young East Indian couples, half a dozen Indigenous people, and even four young Québécois and Québécoise. The usual stampede off the train at Saskatoon for smokes was less frenetic this trip. Our late arrival at Edmonton went smoothly, with No. 2 there but clearing 10 minutes after we pulled past for the usual back-up move into the station. (*Note: Although, due to my lowly Economy status, I could not visit LAURENTIDE PARK or the Dining cars, I did notice YORK and FRONTENAC seemed unfamiliar; upon checking things out, I found that I had not recorded the former since 2011, the latter since 2017.*)

WILD FIRES AGAIN

My return to Watrous, scheduled for 23 JUL, was cancelled due to wild fires along much of No. 2's route, but especially a state-of-emergency issued for Jasper National Park the day my intended train left Vancouver. Somewhat as had happened the previous summer, No. 2 was turned back at Kamloops North to Vancouver, and No. 1 held here in Edmonton before returning east later in the week. Rather than trying to reach Saskatoon by a slow, multi-stop, post-Greyhound-era bus, or by outrageously expensive flights, I stayed put while Sandra drove back on her own.

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2020's-57: LAURENTIDE PARK bringing up the rear of VIA No. 1 Canadian at Saskatoon (2024/07/16) [PETER DAWES].

11 SEP:

VIA 1 [TORONTO] EDMONTON-VANCOUVER *Canadian*

E	[2]	6459,6421
X		8613
C	[2]	8125, 8108
CfeL		8501
S	[3]	Craig Manor ,Christie Manor, Wolfe Manor
CfeL		8509
D		Empress
S	[6]	Elgin Manor,Franklin Manor, Carleton Manor,Laird Manor, Bayfield Manor,Abbott Manor
CfeL		8500
D		Frontenac
S	[2]	Château Denonville, Château Jolliet
OLS		Laurentide Park

To **VANCOUVER** with Sandra (after reaching the station by taxi), at the beginning of a trip to visit friends in Sacramento, via Portland and San Francisco, returning via Denver; * Depart 2340 (scheduled for 0001 on the 11th), arrive Pacific Central Station one hour late on the second morning at 0900, stops including Hinton, Blue River BC and Kamloops North (onward from the station to the Sylvia Hotel on English Bay by Expo Skytrain, then No. 5 trolley bus; two nights there); * In a first, we occupied Upper Berths in separate MANOR cars; * 1,245 km in 34 hrs 20 mins, or 36 km/h (*777 mls/23 mph*).

NINE CARS APART

This 20-car No. 1 ran close to time most of the way, even leaving Edmonton 21 minutes early, presumably because all passengers joining there had been accounted for. Due to the train's being sold out, we both had Uppers, mine in CRAIG MANOR (first time occupied), Sandra's nine cars back in BAYFIELD MANOR – although we were allowed to take meals together in Dining Car "A", EMPRESS. My Section area was dominated by five women travelling as a group!



2020's-58: Burnt-out west end of Jasper AB from Skyline 8509
in No. 1 *Canadian* (2024/09/11) [SANDRA DAWES].

A SAD RUN THROUGH JASPER

Due to eastbound No. 2 also coming into Edmonton that evening, VIA's small Edmonton station was standing-room only. Many of those people had been slated to join VIA's No. 1 and No. 2 at Jasper, but had to be diverted to Edmonton due to one-third of the town being destroyed by a wild fire back on July 24th. Although the station and most of Canadian National's facilities looked unharmed, the town had been shut down, including to VIA trains – which were now passing through and being serviced near Hinton AB, some 80 kilometres [50 miles] to the east and a regular request stop for the *Canadian*. (*Note: The Jasper stops would be resumed in late September.*)



[Celebrating one hundred years of Canadian National, 1919-2019 (Canadian Rail, 2019/05-06, front cover)]



2020's-59: Canadian Rockies from No. 1 Canadian
(2024/09/11 [SANDRA DAWES]).

MAKE WAY FOR THE CN BRASS

At 1440 hours on Sept. 11th, No. 1 had barely entered a passing track when a passenger train of some sort blew by on the main, including a dome car. Later on, at Kamloops North, there sat a CN executive train: Locomotives 3309 & 3350; Power Car FRASER SPIRIT; Sleeper BATON ROUGE; Dome Lounge Observation AMERICAN SPIRIT; Reception/Marketing Car TAWAW; and Observation/Theatre Car SANDFORD FLEMING. According to VIA crew members, it was carrying the president & chief executive officer and other brass.

VANCOUVER AGAIN

Our two-night stay featured Queen Elizabeth Park and its conservatory, Vancouver Art Gallery, Frankie's Jazz Cub, and a SeaBus excursion to North Vancouver (passing the cruise ship CELEBRITY SUMMIT, just in from Alaska and heading south to San Francisco and the Panama Canal). Most of our travel was on the No. 5 and 6 trolley buses, and the Expo and Canada SkyTrain lines.



2020's-60: Three PARK cars at Pacific Central Station, Vancouver, our LAURENTIDE (left), ASSINIBOINE (centre) & EVANGELINE (right), a fourth REVELSTOKE (out of photo to the left) (2024/09/12) [SANDRA DAWES].

14 SEP:

AM 517 VANCOUVER-PORTLAND Cascades

NPCU	90250
KDn	58106
C [4]	54578,54574,54504, 54532
E	1403

Depart Pacific Central Station 15 minutes ahead of schedule at 0700 (having accessed the station by taxi), arrive Union Station five minutes late at 1540, its dozen stops including Bellingham WA, Everett, Seattle and Tacoma; * We occupied Coach seats in a Horizon Coach; * Onward by TriMet LRT to the Mark Spencer Hotel for one night; * 557 km in 7 hrs 40 min, or 76 km/h (343 mls/47 mph); * No. 1403 (EMD, 1998); No. 90250 (EMD, 1977, ex-250); * Nos. 58106 (ex-Dn 53506); No. 54532 (BBB, 1988-90).



2020's-61: Amtrak's No. 517 Cascades newly arrived at Portland Union Station from Vancouver BC, led by a beat up "Non-Powered Control Car" (2024/09/14) [SANDRA DAWES].

CASCADES

Amtrak continued to operate two Vancouver-Seattle trains (one continuing onward to Portland) as part of a corridor service financially supported by the Washington and Oregon state governments, under the marketing name *Cascades*. Our train was made up of Bombardier-built "Horizon" cars, dating back to the late 1980's. It was led by a worn-out-looking "Non-Powered Control Unit" fabricated from a retired Electromotive Division of General Motors F40PH; the power coming from another F40PH. (*Note: Amtrak also operated other trains in this corridor, using not only Horizon but Superliner and Spanish-designed Talgo trains as well.*)



[From the side of Amtrak Non-Powered Control Unit No. 90250 (2024)] [PETER DAWES]

PORTLAND FOR ONE NIGHT

As we left Portland Union Station, we encountered No. 517's café attendant, who was taking a break before his next train: he offered tips on restaurants and ice cream shops. We subsequently took in Powell's City of Books (surely one of the biggest and best used bookstores anywhere), had dinner at Deschutes Brewery Public House (reached by foot in a sudden, drenching, west-coast rain storm), and made a round-the-city circle trip on TriMet's "B Loop" streetcar line. (Other trips were on the "A Loop" and North-South lines.)

15 SEP:

AM 11 [SEATTLE] PORTLAND-EMERYVILLE [LOS ANGELES] *Coast Starlight*

E	[2]	318,11
X		61004
SY		39014
S	[2]	32042 ,32106
D		38062
CfeL		33016
C	[2]	34515,34054
CX		31002

To **EMERYVILLE CA**, accessing Union Station by an "A" streetcar; * Depart 28 minutes late at 1450 (instead of the scheduled 1422), arrive Emeryville on time at 0829, including stops at Eugene, Chemult, Klamath Falls, Redding CA and Sacramento, behind ALC-42 Charger and P42DC locomotives – followed by a bus transfer over the Bay Bridge to San Francisco; * We occupied a Deluxe Room in one of two Sleeping cars. * 1,036 km in 17 hrs 39 mins, or 59 km/h (637 mls/37 mph); * No. 318 (SMS, 2022); * No. 11 (GE, 1996-7); Nos. 32042, 34106 (5de14ec1fm1di), 34054, 38062, 33016, 31002 (PS, 1978-81); * Nos. 34515 (ex-34115), 39014 (BBD, 1993-4); * No. 61004 (CAF, 2014).



[portlandstreetcar.org (2024)]



2020's-62: Amtrak's No. 11 *Coast Starlight*, newly arrived at Emeryville CA, transfer point for San Francisco by bus (2024/09/16) [SANDRA DAWES].

COAST STARLIGHT

In our first trip on this train since 2018, No. 11 ran close to schedule the entire trip after leaving Portland half-an-hour late. Diner in the Dining car was quite good, but not up to the standard established by VIA's *Canadian* – and for some reason no coffee was offered. That aside, our fellow passengers were friendly in both the Diner and the "Sightseer" Lounge car. We enjoyed a deluxe bedroom on the top floor of our bilevel Sleeping car, featuring a shower – no "Roomettes" (also two-person) being available when I booked. On the downside, the lower bed was so wide that it was difficult to use the sink; the beds were comfortable, but we had to ask the grumpy attendant to put down the upper one.

Coast Starlight

Seattle - Portland - Sacramento - Los Angeles

35 hours

[amtrak.com/coast-starlight-train (2024)]

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2024



2020's-63: Upper level of Amtrak Sightseer Lounge 33016, in No. 11 Coast Starlight (author standing) (2024/09/15) [SANDRA DAWES].

RURAL PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN OREGON

A National Public Radio reporter/producer and her cameraperson were in the Sightseer Lounge when we boarded at Portland, their assignment being to investigate public transportation options in rural Oregon. Due to the disappearance of traditional scheduled bus services, these apparently consisted mainly of local shuttle and handi-buses arranged by various public agencies, mainly to get people to the nearest urban centre having the required health-care facility. These services were partly funded through federal Medicare (primarily for older people and persons with disabilities) and Medicaid (low-income people) programs. The more recent Affordable Care Act also played a role. The two NPR types would leave *Coast Starlight* at its regular Klamath Falls stop, around 2200 hours.

BACK IN THE CITY BY THE BAY

After our bus transfer from Emeryville to San Francisco, we took the California, then Powell & Hyde, cable cars to old favourite Beresford Arms Hotel on Post Street, where we would spend three nights in a huge suite. It was the only room left in the hotel when I booked, due to a Salesforce convention which brought some 42,000 to the city – Salesforce being a “cloud-based” software company focused on customer relations. We did the usual things for us: took the exhausting city tour devised by old friend and SFO native Tom Matoff, including everything from Coit Tower to the palatial Palace Hotel, City Lights Book Store, Hang Ah café in Chinatown, Ferry Building, the iconic Tadish Grill, and, of course, the Cable Car Barns & Museum. One new-to-us feature was the fleet of driverless Waymo automobiles taking passengers all around the city, taxi-like. We walked or used Municipal Railway transit services at all times, ranging from the historic F streetcar to the N Judah light-rail line out to Ocean Beach, Geary Rapid bus 38R back from Cliff House, and (naturally) all three cable car lines.



[[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco_Municipal_Railway \(2024\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco_Municipal_Railway)]



2020's-64: San Francisco Municipal Railways' Powell & Mason Line cable car, crossing the California Line at Powell & California streets (2024/09/17 or 18) [SANDRA DAWES].

19 SEP:

AM 528 [SAN JOSE] EMERYVILLE-SACRAMENTO *Capitol Corridor*

CabC	8302
CfeL	8811
C [2]	8009, 8029
E	2102

To **SACRAMENTO**, after a Powell & Hyde-California cable car, then Amtrak bus transfer from San Francisco; * Depart four minutes late at 1010, arrive Valley Station on time at 1157, including stops at Berkeley, Richmond, Martinez and Davis (two nights on the DELTA KING hotel); * We occupied Coach seats in this *Capitol Corridor* train powered by an SC-44 locomotive; * 136 km in 1 hrs 57 mins, or 70 km/h (84 mls/44 mph); * No. 2102 (SMS, 2016); * All cars (MKA/ALS, 1994-7).



[capitolcorridor.org (2024)]



2020's-65: Amtrak No. 517 *Capitol Corridor* at Sacramento Valley Station (2024/09/19) [SANDRA DAWES].

CAPITOL CORRIDOR

Originating at San Jose, No. 712 was funded by Caltrans, a state transportation agency, and operated by Amtrak under contract. The bi-level units, which were called "California Cars" and labelled "Amtrak California", were owned by Caltrans. Construction had been started by Morrison-Knudsen, but completed by Amerail (American Passenger Rail Car Co.); during 2009-12, they were rebuilt by Alstom. They originally were assigned to the *Capitol Corridor* trains (San Jose-Sacramento), *San Joaquin* (Oakland-Bakersfield), and *San Diegans* (Los Angeles-San Diego), but from the early 2000's were withdrawn from the last-mentioned route. Locomotive No. 2102 was a Siemens product, one of an order fulfilled during 2016-7.



[From an ad for *DELTA KING* & *DELTA QUEEN*, 1927-40] [SANDRA DAWES]



2020's-66: Former Sacramento-San Francisco river steamer, now hotel, DELTA KING, Sacramento (2024/09/19) [SANDRA DAWES].

SACRAMENTO STAY

We spent two nights on the DELTA KING, a preserved river steamer that was now a hotel, restaurant and lounge. This steamer used to run overnight between Sacramento and San Francisco, alongside DELTA QUEEN. The main purpose of our visit was to have dinner, on DELTA KING, with old transportation colleagues and friends Greg Thompson and Tom Matoff, the former living in the city, the latter 50 kilometres (31 miles) away near Winters CA. Earlier in the day, we toured the impressive California State Capitol building; then the magnificent California State Railroad Museum with Greg, the many exhibits including the preserved Canadian National, 10 Section, 1 Drawing Room, 1 Compartment Sleeping car ST. HYACINTHE, which had been fitted with a device that simulated the sounds and rocking movement of such a car back in the day.

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2024



2020's-67: Drinks on the DELTA KING, Sacramento, (left-right) Tom Matoff, Sandra, author & Greg Thompson (2024/09/20) ["THE SERVER"].

21 SEP:

AM 6 [EMERYVILLE] SACRAMENTO-DENVER [CHICAGO] California Zephyr

E	[2]	187,13
X		61040
SY		39024
S	[2]	32094,32032
D		38016
CfeL		33030
C		34047
CX		31018

To **DENVER**, accessing Valley Station by foot; * Depart on time at 1023, arrive Union Station 13 minutes late at 1840, including stops at Colfax, Truckee, Reno NV, Winnemucca, Salt Lake City UT, Provo, Grand Junction CO, and Glenwood Springs, behind two P42DC locomotives – followed by another walk to Kimpton Monaco Hotel for one night; * We occupied a two-berth "Roomette" on the bottom floor of one of two bi-level Superliner Sleeping cars. * 2,274 km in 31 hrs 17 mins, or 73 km/h (1,400 mls/47 mph).



2020's-68: Amtrak No. 6 *California Zephyr* at Grand Junction CO, lead engine P42DC 187, Sandra looking on (2024/09/22) [PETER DAWES].

CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR

This was my first trip on this train since 2008, when I went from Chicago to Grand Junction, then onward to Emeryville, on No. 5, having met up with Tom, Greg and others to ride the Durango & Silverton steam train. This 2024 No. 6 ran fairly close to schedule, although its departure from Salt Lake City was an hour late at 0420, which carried on most of the way to Denver. Our consist was mostly the same as for *Coast Starlight*, except that the locomotives were both older P42DC's (whereas the former train had one P43DC and one much newer ALC-42 Charger), and there were two instead of three Coaches. We noticed that there were way fewer freight trains than on Canadian National, both on the Union Pacific's ex-Southern Pacific main line in California, and on the former Denver & Rio Grande Western's line in Utah and Colorado – and what freights there were had three to five locomotives compared to CN's usual two, regardless of train length. Highlights included the High Sierras, badlands of Nevada and Utah, canyons of Colorado, and the 10-kilometre (6 mile) Moffat Tunnel which cuts through the Continental Divide some 80 km (50 mls) from Denver as you travel east. The Sightseer Lounge was crowded throughout, but seats were always available.

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2024

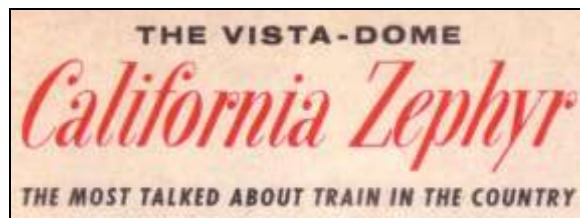


2020's-69: Beds made up in our downstairs Roomette 11, on
California Zephyr (2024/09/22) [SANDRA DAWES].

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2024



2020's-70: Nevada scene from the Sightseer car of *California Zephyr* (2024/09/22) [SANDRA DAWES].



[Advertisement for the old California Zephyr (WP, Vista Dome California Zephyr Time Table, 1967)] [WPCZTT67].

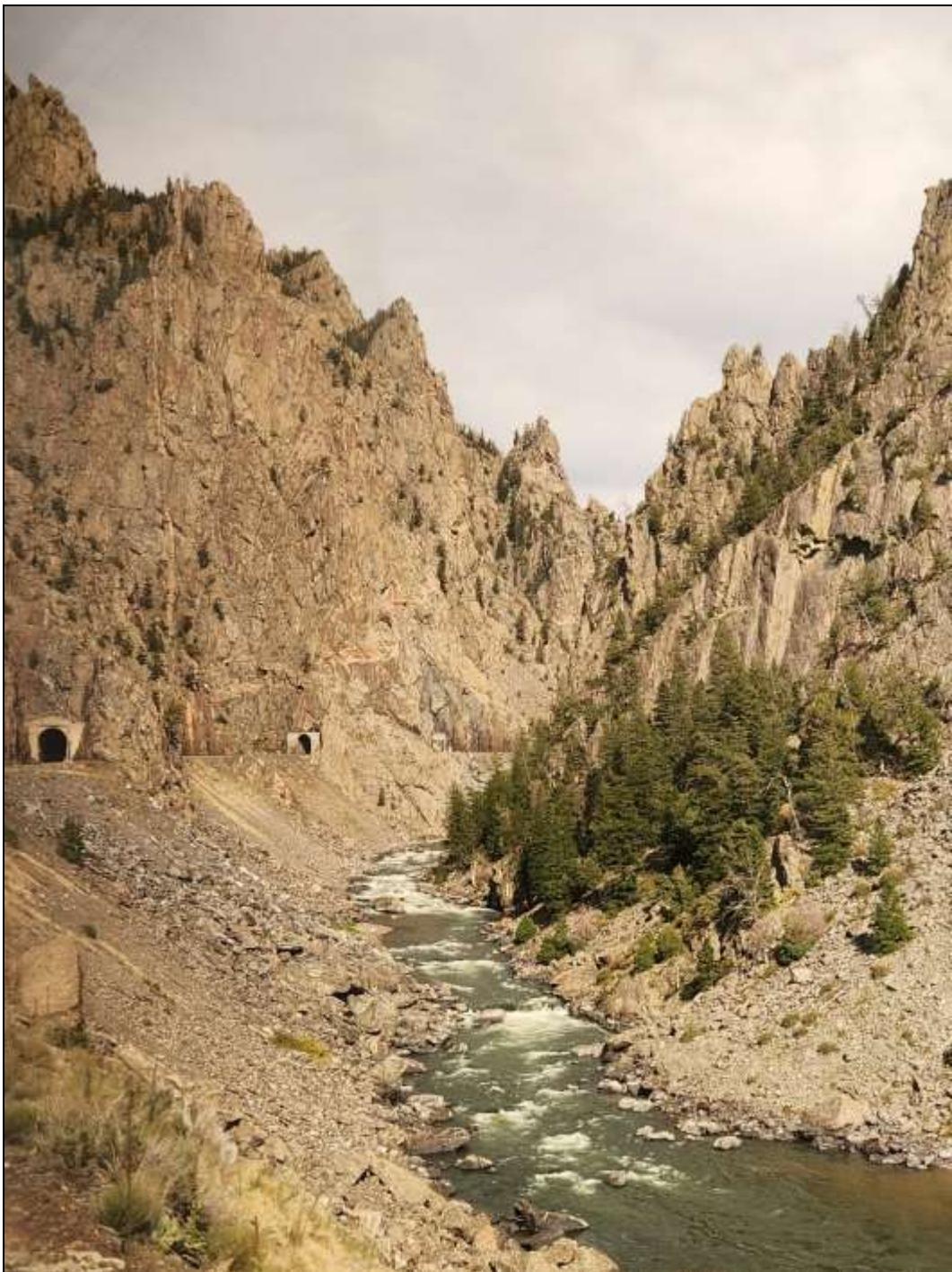


2020's-71: Front end of *California Zephyr*, somewhere in Colorado (2024/09/22) [SANDRA DAWES].

AMTRAK: THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

Assistant Conductor "Cody" provided on-going commentaries on the passing scenery, which included one guy mooning the train from his fishing boat on the Colorado River. (When I asked if I could moon the guy back, "Cody" informed me that, however reluctantly, he would have to escort me from the train at the next stop!) Despite some bossy instructions from the actual Conductor about sittings, the meals in the Dining car were much like on *Coast Starlight*, delivered by our excellent server, "Reecy". In contrast was our Sleeping car attendant, who greeted us with the news that he would be putting down the beds in our Roomette by 2000 hours, no matter what (that was it: no demonstration of how the various dials worked, or where the washrooms were). Next day, this guy failed to put up our beds, admonishing me for not telling him exactly when we wanted the beds up!

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2024



2020's-72: Tunnels looking back from *California Zephyr*, in the Colorado Rockies (2024/09/22) [SANDRA DAWES].



2020's-73: Denver Union Station, as utilized by *California Zephyr* (2024/09/22) [SANDRA DAWES].

FELLOW PASSENGERS

... proved interesting, as always: • a young man going to New York with his father-in-law, flying onward from Denver on a “red-eye” flight – the former being a committed passenger-train rider; • a younger couple from Memphis TN who had booked a trip on *City of New Orleans* to Chicago, *Empire Builder* to Glacier National Park, rental car to Salt Lake City, *California Zephyr* to Chicago, and *City* back home; • a fellow who appeared to have severe autism, watched over by one of the Coach attendants on his several visits to the snack bar on the lower level of the Sightseer Lounge car; and • a lady in the Roomette across from ours who asked the fellow in the next Roomette to close his door if he was going to persist in playing a Trump speech at high volume – only to have this guy tell her to close her own door, too!

- **23 SEP:** Back to **EDMONTON** on a United Airlines A319 (codeshare through Air Canada), having accessed Denver International Airport, from Union Station, by means of Denver Regional Transportation District (RTD)'s “A” commuter rail line.

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2025

2025

*ALBERTA/SASKATCHEWAN
MANITOBA/ONTARIO/
QUÉBEC*



[\[viarail.ca/en/offers/canada-strong-pass#js-promo-node__collapse-89267\]](http://viarail.ca/en/offers/canada-strong-pass#js-promo-node__collapse-89267)

SYNOPSIS

I travelled by train in 2025 again to visit family and friends in Saskatchewan and back east in Ontario and Québec. The above logo concerned a VIA summer promotion which permitted adults to bring along family members at no additional cost.

Trips taken: Nine trips were involved covering 9,302 kilometres (5,805 miles), all by VIA. Six were in my "Coach" category, the other 3 in "Sleeper". None was on self-propelled trains; none behind steam.

Equipment units: 126, made up of 16 Locomotives & Related Units and 110 cars (Coaches & Daynitors, 26; Parlor & Club Cars, 12; Sleeping & Business Cars, 44; Dining & Other Meal Cars, 8; Lounge Cars, 16; Baggage & Miscellaneous Cars, 4).

Places visited: **ON** – Anna Lake*, Kingston and Toronto; **QC** – Montréal and Québec City; **SK** – Watrous. (**Note:** * indicates by non-rail means.)

Noteworthy train trips: **VIA Canadian**, Toronto to Edmonton; **VIA Bonaventure** (No. 69), Montréal to Toronto.

Fastest average speed: **VIA Capital**, Toronto to Kingston: 93 km/h (54 mph).

Slowest average speed: **VIA Canadian**, Edmonton to Toronto: 48 km/h (36 mph).

Overseas: I took my seventeenth Overseas and fourteenth European holiday (twelfth and ninth with Sandra, respectively), from 21 APR to 14 JUN, visiting Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Romania, Scotland, Switzerland, Turkey and Wales.

HIGHLIGHT!

Riding VIA's *Canadian* in both directions between Edmonton and Toronto, in full trains populated with tourists from Australia to Switzerland and several other countries, served by excellent Winnipeg-based crews.

MILESTONE

Taking our first trip in one of VIA's Venture Business Class cars, from Montréal to Toronto on No. 69 (formerly called *Bonaventure*), late running but good attendants and a fully acceptable meal, despite being heated up.



[From card provided to us for meals in Dining car "B"
EMPRESS, VIA No. 2 Canadian (2025/09/11)]

TRIPS AND CONSISTS



2020's-74: VIA Rail's No. 1 Canadian arriving Watrous SK, powered by three General Motors F40PH-3's ("Love the Way") (2025/07/25) [SANDRA DAWES].

- **20 JUL:** To **WATROUS** by car with Sandra, her intention being to spend approximately two weeks with her mother, mine to return to Edmonton on VIA No. 1 Canadian after one week, spend the next week at home, return to Watrous on VIA No. 2, and finally drive home with Sandra.



[VIA slogan (from "Guest directory for passengers in Sleeper Plus class" pamphlet, 2019, back cover)]

25 JUL:

VIA 1 [TORONTO] WATROUS-EDMONTON [VANCOUVER] Canadian

E	[3]	6454,6453,6413
X		8600
C	[2]	8102 ,8140
CfeL		8506
S	[3]	Thompson Manor,Brant Manor, Bayfield Manor
CfeL		8512
D		York
S	[6]	Dunsmuir Manor,Franklin Manor, Grant Manor,Wolfe Manor, Jarvis Manor,Osler Manor
CfeL		8501
D		Acadian
S	[2]	Château Salaberry, Château Varennes
OLS		Laurentide Park

To **EDMONTON**, departing 0840 and arriving 2005 (*scheduled for 0754 and 2050, respectively*), including stops at Saskatoon, Unity and Wainwright AB, behind three General Motors F40PH-3's (home by taxi); * I booked a Coach seat, but spent almost all of my time in Skyline car 8506; * 619 km in 11 hrs 25 mins, or 54 km/h (386 mls/34 mph); * Nos. 6454, 6453, 6413 (GMD, 1989); * Nos. 8102 (ex-102), 8506 (ex-CP CfLC 506, VIA 506), 8600 (ex-CP XY 3000, CP,VIA 600), THOMPSON MANOR (3sc4rm5db1ct), YORK (all Budd/AMFT, 1954-5; ex-CP); CHÂTEAU SALABERRY (6de), LAURENTIDE PARK (1de1di) (Budd/AMFT/ARI/JRS, 1954-5; ex-CP).



[From VIA Route Guide, Toronto-Vancouver, 2017]

3 AUG:**VIA 2 [VANCOUVER] EDMONTON-WATROUS [TORONTO] Canadian**

E	[3]	6429,6454,6452
X		8604
C	[2]	8117,8109
CfeL		8516
S	[3]	Brock Manor,Christie Manor, Laird Manor
CfeL		8507
D		Fairholme,
S	[6]	Mackenzie Manor,Elgin Manor, Draper Manor,Monck Manor, Burton Manor, Hearne Manor
CfeL		8510
D		Imperial
S	[2]	Château Denonville, Château Lauzon
OLS		Prince Albert Park

Back to **WATROUS**, departing 0047 and arriving 1315 (*scheduled for 1950 the evening before and 0826, respectively*); * My access to Edmonton station was by taxi, and I occupied my usual Lower Berth in a MANOR car; * 619 km in 12 hrs 28 mins, or 50 km/h (386 mls/31 mph); * **4 AUG:** Return to Edmonton with Sandra by car.

LATE BUT ALSO EARLY -THEN REALLY LATE!

No. 1 *Canadian* arrived some 45 minutes *late* into Watrous but – miraculously – was 45 minutes *early* into Edmonton. It was 20 cars long, behind three instead of the usual two locomotives. I had occupied Coach 8102 twice, but only back in the mid-1970's as CP Rail No. 102. Returning, No. 2 was an hour late into Edmonton, but did not depart until 0045 – almost five hours late! Since the Jasper wildfire disaster of the previous summer, VIA apparently could not water the train there, instead having to do so in Edmonton from a truck – the manoeuvre that could begin only after passengers had boarded.

LOTS OF YOUNG PERSONS

VIA was running a "Canada Strong Pass" promotion, whereby a child, 17 & under, could travel free when accompanied by a "capable adult", or a young person 18-24 could receive 25% off the regular fare. Any VIA train was eligible between June 16 and Sept. 2, 2025, for Escape and Economy, but not Economy Plus fares (these were tiered fares with varying refund availability, and so on). Needless to say, the Coaches on No. 1, and Sleepers on No. 2 featured a lot more young people than usual, the kids ranging from infant-in-arms to mid-teens. Understandably, some of the children appeared lost without internet connection, and some behaved quite badly in No. 1's Dome, their parent(s) nowhere to be found. On No. 2, in my HEARNE MANOR, there was an interesting Québécois extended family who took up most of the Uppers and Lowers. They were well served by our bilingual attendant.

9-12 SEP:

VIA 2 [VANCOUVER] EDMONTON-TORONTO *Canadian*

E	[2]	6432,6415
X		8600
C	[2]	8124,8102
CfeL		8506
S	[3]	Dawson Manor,Thompson Manor, Bayfield Manor
CfeL		8512
D		York
S	[6]	Dunsmuir Manor,Franklin Manor, Grant Manor,Christie Mano,r Douglas Manor, Brock Manor
CfeL		8504
D		Kent
S	[2]	Château Cadillac,Château Varennes
OLS		Laurentide Park



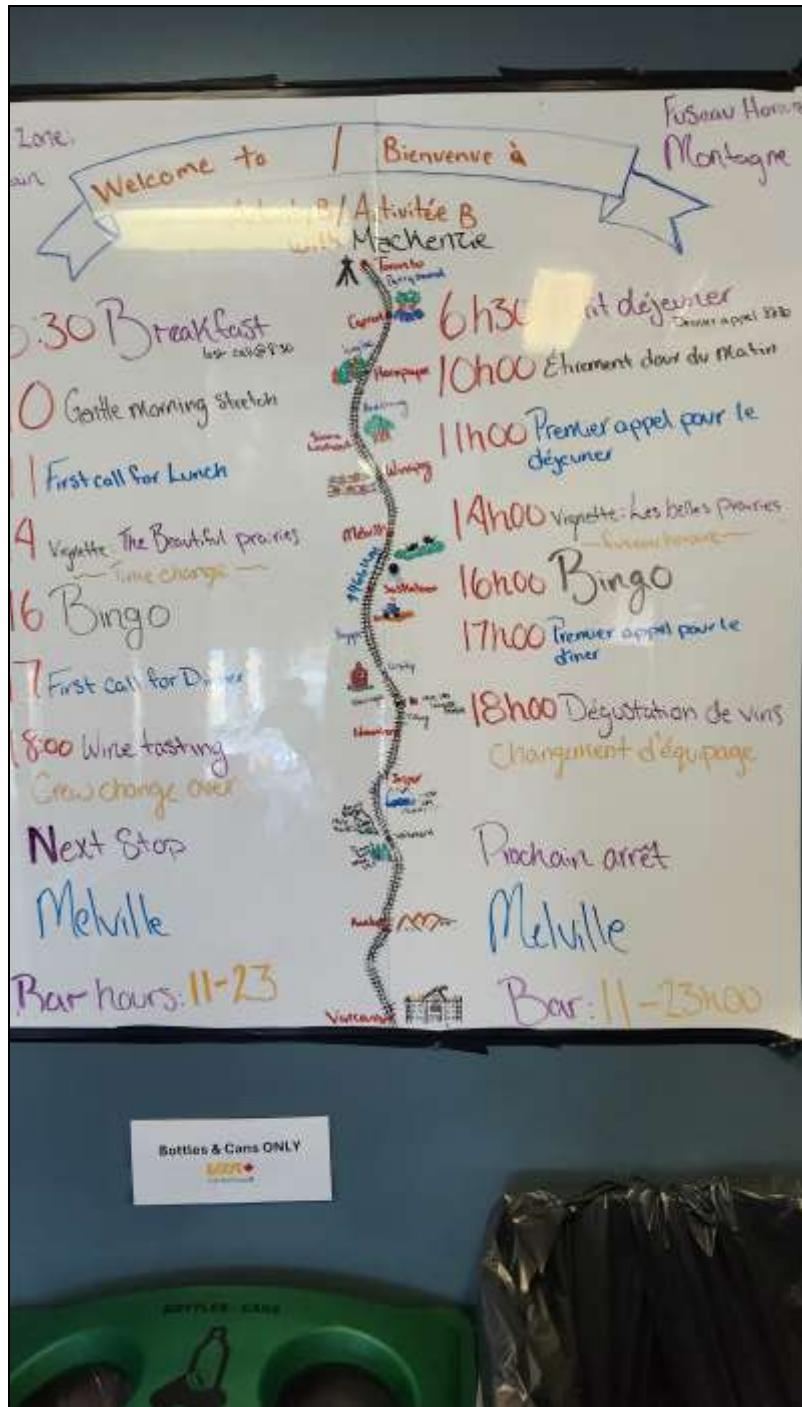
2020's-75: VIA No. 2 *Canadian* paused at Capreol ON for servicing, featuring our BROCK MANOR Sleeping car (2025/09/11) [SANDRA DAWES].

To **TORONTO** with Sandra, departing at 2040 and arriving Union Station early at 1415 (scheduled for 1950 and 1429, respectively), at the start of a trip taking in Kingston, Montréal and Québec City (access to the station by taxi); * Included on No. 2 were stops at Wainwright, Saskatoon, Melville and Winnipeg MB, Sioux Lookout ON, Hornepayne, Capreol and Washago, behind two General Motors F40PH-3's; * We booked a Section in BROCK MANOR (first time occupying this car), then by foot the short distance to the reopened Union Hotel (formerly called Strathcona but used as an emigrant hotel for the last several years), for one night; * 3,221 km in 67 hrs 35 mins, or 48 km/h (2,010 mls/30 mph); * BROCK MANOR (3sc4rm5db1ct) (Budd/AMFT, 1954-5; ex-CP).

FIVE HOURS LATE, BUT EARLY INTO TORONTO

Our 20-car, September No. 2 was on time through Watrous but approximately an hour late arriving Winnipeg. For some reason, the train was almost four hours late departing there for Toronto at 0315 – and five hours behind by Sioux Lookout ON. Almost all of the time had been made up by Parry Sound, and we were a quarter of an hour early arriving Union Station. As for our Sleeping car, this was my first time occupying BROCK MANOR.

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2025



2020's-76: Attendant "Taylor"'s daily board in "Activity Car B",
VIA No. 2 Canadian, first day out from Edmonton
(2025/09/10) [SANDRA DAWES].

HIGHLIGHTS AND LOWLIGHTS

The bumper crowd on this mid-September train was mainly Canadian and European, and included a father-and-daughter from the author's old hometown of Alexandria ON (cue much reminiscing). The crews both west and east of Winnipeg were uniformly superb. A highlight was spotting a mother bear and two cubs somewhere in Northern Ontario; a lowlight the over-air-conditioned dome of Skyline No. 8504 – a seemingly intractable problem in these aging cars, and beyond the ability of the crews to fix enroute.

13 SEP:

VIA 40 TORONTO-KINGSTON [OTTAWA] Capital

E	912
K	[2] 3458,3466
C	[3] 3351 ,3334,3343

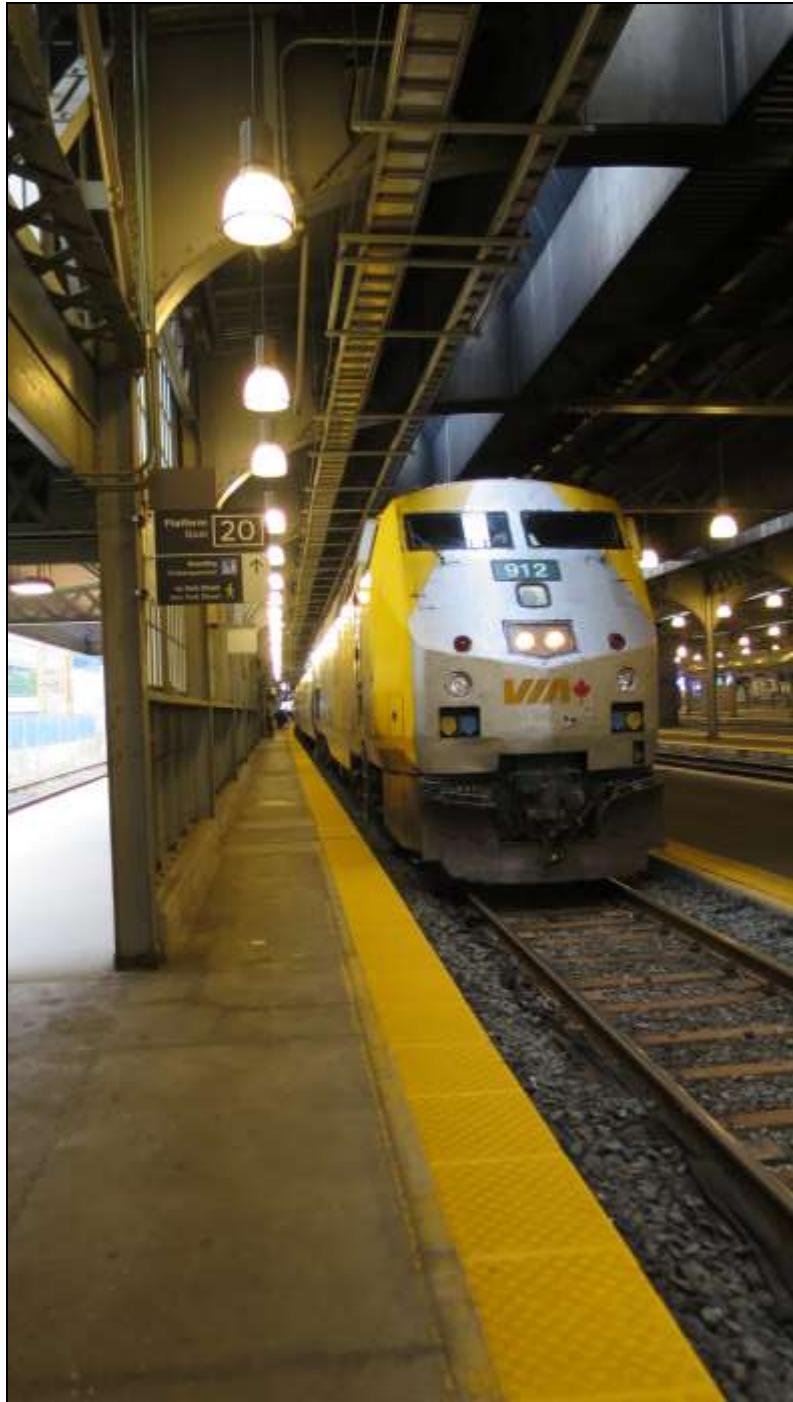
To **KINGSTON** on a Saturday morning train stopping only at Belleville; * Depart Union Station at 1038, arrive 17 minutes late at 1305; * We occupied a Coach in an LRC train pulled by a P42DC Genesis locomotive; * By taxi to the Hochelaga Inn for three nights; * 254 km in 2 hrs 27 mins, or 93 km/h (159 mls/58 mph); * No. 912 (GE, 2001); * Nos. 3351, 3458 (ex-C 3382) (BBD, 1981-4). • **14 MAY:** To **Anna Lake** (near Barrys Bay) by rental car to visit brother Ray and Mary-Rose, joined there by brother David and sister Dorothy.

16 SEP:

VIA 62 [TORONTO] KINGSTON-MONTRÉAL

E	2215	
K	[2] 2615,2715	
C	[2] 2915,2815	
CabC	2315	
E	2221	TORONTO-BROCKVILLE [OTTAWA]
K	[2] 2621,2721	"
C	[2] 2921,2821	"
CabC	2321	"

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2025



2020's-77: Venerable P42DC Genesis locomotive 912 waiting in
Toronto Union Station to take VIA No. 40 to Kingston &
on to Ottawa (2025/09/13) [PETER DAWES].



2020's-78: VIA J-train at Kingston, No. 62 to Montréal leading behind Siemens Charger No. 2215, No. 52 to Ottawa trailing, both Venture sets (2025/09/16) [SANDRA DAWES].

To **MONTRÉAL** on a “J-train” featuring two of VIA’s Siemens Venture trainsets powered by Charger locomotives, the leading set to Montréal, the trailing one to Ottawa; * Depart 22 minutes late at 1027, arrive Central Station 75 minutes late at 1515, stopping at Brockville (operational only), Cornwall and Dorval; * We occupied one of the two regular Coaches, the other cars being two Business Class and the Cab Coach, running at the rear this day; * By foot to Hotel Griffintown for two nights; * 285 km in 4 hrs 48 mins, or 59 km/h (178 mls/37 mph); * All SMS 2021.

SIGNALLING PROBLEMS?

The Service Manager provided updates from time to time, blaming the delay on “signalling problems”. The big slowdown came after the Ottawa set was detached at Brockville: we were only half an hour in arrears by Cornwall, but over an hour by Dorval. Late in 2024, Canadian National had imposed speed restrictions on the Venture trains, citing issues with signalling and speed detection. If legitimate, the matter could be addressed by adding more cars (and therefore axles), installing “shunt enhancers” designed to strengthen the reliability of track circuits, or running at lower speeds approaching the many grade crossings on VIA routes. At time of writing, speed restrictions had been applied, and VIA had added two more cars to an initial two trainsets to meet CN’s apparent concerns.

REM PROBLEMS

Just a quick visit to Montréal this time, featuring the Réseau express métropolitain (REM) light-rail line over the river to Brossard to visit sister Dorothy and family. When we returned to the REM Panama Station, we found that line had been shut down for the night, forcing us to take a replacement bus back over the river – one of many disruptions as the line was readied for extension through the tunnel to Deux-Montagnes and the West Island. We also careened around the city with buddy Shaun, the highlight being the travelling World Photo Exhibition in the Old Port.

18 SEP:

VIA 22 [OTTAWA] MONTRÉAL-QUÉBEC

CabC	2305
C	[2] 2805,2905
K	[2] 2705,2605
E	2205

On to **QUÉBEC** on another Venture trainset, departing Central Station 32 minutes late at 0908 (due to the train arriving late from Ottawa), arriving Gare du Palais approximately 40 minutes behind schedule at 1226, stopping at St-Lambert, St-Hyacinthe, Drummondville and Ste-Foy – again, “signal issues” (by foot up the hill to Hotel Clarendon for two nights); * 272 km in 3 hrs 18 mins, or 82 km/h (170 mls/51 mph).

ALWAYS INTERESTING

Another quick visit to Québec City, involving the Plains of Abraham, the archaeological ruins under the Château Frontenac boardwalk, and the mandatory Lévis ferry crossing. The German Phoenix Reisen cruise ship AMADEA was in port for the day, set to depart that evening for New York – her guests contributing to the huge crowds of tourists milling around the old town.



2020's-79: VIA Venture train No. 22 just arrived at Gare du Palais from Ottawa & Montréal (2025/09/18) [SANDRA DAWES].

20 SEP:

VIA 637 QUÉBEC-MONTRÉAL [OTTAWA]

E	2215
K	[2] 2615,2715
C	[2] 2915, 2815
CabC	2315

To **TORONTO** via Montréal on a Saturday, departing Gare du Palais at 1000 on another Venture trainset, arriving Central Station six minutes early at 1325, same stops except none at St-Hyacinthe – no “signal issues” this time; * 272 km in 3 hrs 25 mins, or 80 km/h (170 mls/50mph).



[Logo of cruise ship AMADEA operators (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenix_Reisen)]

VIA 69 MONTRÉAL-TORONTO *Bonaventure*

CabC	2325
C	[2] 2825,2925
K	[2] 2725, 2625
E	2225

Depart 1638, arrive Union Station 89 minutes late at 2307, after stopping at Dorval, Cornwall, Brockville, Kingston, Oshawa and Guildwood; * We occupied a Venture Business car for the first time; * By foot to Union Hotel again (one night); * 539 km in 6 hrs 29 mins, or 83 km/h (336 mls/52 mph).

DELAYED BY A GRASS FIRE

This Saturday evening trip got off to an inauspicious start when one of the doors to our Business Class car was not working, requiring us to board through the next car. Then our car attendant, when asked, did not know in which direction the train would be leaving Central Station! Worse was to come: there was a grass fire no more than five minutes out of the station, which delayed our Dorval arrival by 45 minutes. By Kingston, we were almost an hour late, and never made up any time – unsurprising, given CN's imposed speed restrictions. On the plus side, the attendants turned out to be excellent (offering to move us to facing seats), and our meals were very good, considering they were frozen until heated.



[From card provided to room holders on VIA's Canadian]

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2025



2020's-80: Glass work in VIA Dining car EMPRESS, depicting a Magpie, No. 1 Canadian (2025/09/22) [SANDRA DAWES].

21-24 SEP:

VIA 1 TORONTO-EDMONTON [VANCOUVER] Canadian

E	[2]	6420,6418
X		8608
C	[2]	8103,8105
CfeL		8500
S	[3]	Brant Manor,Abbot Manor, Lorne Manor
CfeL		8517
D		Emerald
S	[6]	Allan Manor,Bliss Manor, Rogers Manor,Drummond Manor, Amherst Manor ,Hunter Manor
CfeL		8508
D		Empress
S	[2]	Château Joliett,Château Maisonneuve
OLS		Jasper Park

Back home to **EDMONTON**, departing 0955 and arriving after midnight three evenings later at 0115 (home by taxi); * We again occupied a Section in a MANOR car; * 3,221 km in 64 hrs 20 mins, or 50 km/h (2,010 mls/31 mph); * JASPER PARK (1de1di) (Budd/AMFT/ARI/JRS, 1954-5; ex-CP, VIA Kootenay Park, 2025).

FROM AUSTRALIA TO SWITZERLAND!

No. 2 *Canadian* featured a full house of interesting passengers, including tour groups from Australia and Switzerland. A VIA mechanic out of the Toronto maintenance facility, and his wife, were taking their dream trip on the *Canadian* (he being a member of the VIA Historical Society, which was in the process of assembling a fleet representative of the corporation's almost five decade existence). Also on board was an enthusiast who had briefly worked for CP. As on our eastbound trip, the Winnipeg crews were excellent.



2020's-81: VIA No. 1 Canadian at Sioux Lookout ON, F40PH-3's 6420 & 6418 being refuelled (2025/09/22) [SANDRA DAWES].

A SH—T SHOW APPROACHING EDMONTON

We ran close to on time until we reached Saskatoon at 1145, approximately two hours behind schedule, due to frequent eastbound CN freights. We were supposed to be at Wainwright for a crew change at 1633, but didn't get there until 1915 – almost three hours late. A continuous sea of red signals greeted us as we approached Ardrossan, just east of Edmonton – always a bad sign. We proceeded to crawl along, blocked from entering CN's Walker Yard, first by a long potash train, then a humongous container job, which ground to a halt and sat for perhaps 45 minutes beside us before finally getting out of the way. At 0045, closely following the container train, was ... VIA No. 2, way past its scheduled 1950 departure from Edmonton station! We finally came to a halt 0115, compared to the scheduled time on 2050 – four and a half hours down.

NO MATTER WHERE IT'S GOING: 2025



2020's-82: VIA No. 1 *Canadian* at Sioux Lookout ON, local passengers claiming myriad possessions from Baggage car 8608 (2025/09/22) [SANDRA DAWES].

FROM KOOTENAY TO JASPER PARK

Our rear-end JASPER PARK car was formerly KOOTENAY PARK, the name changed in July of this year to honour the fire raged Town of Jasper. On the final evening as we entered Alberta four hours late, JASPER PARK was enlivened by a particularly nice group from Wisconsin. In contrast was a singular, drunken American in the bar area who attempted to broach the subject of the current president, who this fellow claimed never misspoke because he always rigorously studied the matter at hand beforehand!

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[Please note: (i) named trains have their own entry; (ii) stations and other landmarks are indexed under the city or town concerned; and (iii) places are indexed only where they were start or end points of specific trips, or where they were of special interest]

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CHANGES FROM PREVIOUS VERSION

Addition of a new section for **2025**, plus minor stylistic changes and routine updates, including percentage splits by decade (p. 6).