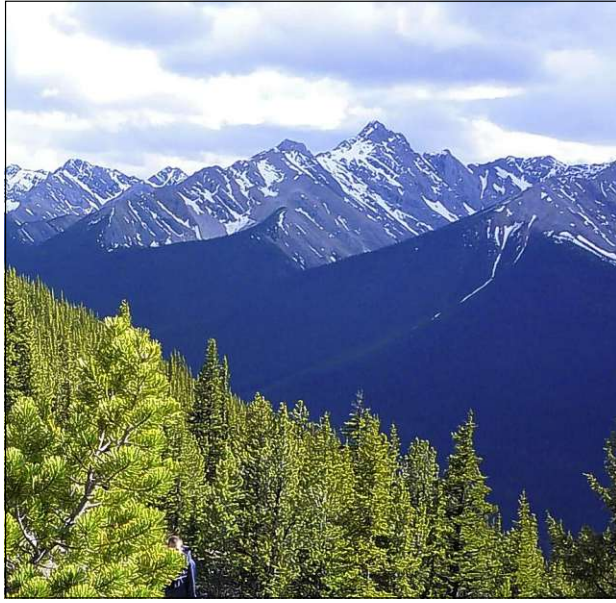


The World According to Johnny Dean



LONG DISTANCE: Johnny Dean crossed the Rockies on his US road trip

Driving through glories of the Rocky Mountains

TOWARDS the end of the Thursday afternoon, I swung east again on I80, which runs from San Francisco, via Chicago to New York. It took me into Wyoming and across the Rocky Mountains.

By 8pm, 24 hours after leaving Seattle, I had covered exactly 1,000 miles. For those first 24 hours I was bang on schedule. I was close to a town called Rock Springs, and spotted a Best Western Hotel called The Outlaw Inn. It was too soon to stop for the night, but I decided I could treat myself to a decent meal. Without doubt, it was the best, and possibly the largest, steak I have ever eaten.

Back on the road, I did a further four hours driving before reaching Cheyenne in the south eastern corner of Wyoming, which I suspect it is rather a beautiful state. I drove through it almost entirely in the dark, so I don't really know!

As I approached Cheyenne, I thought that I'd look for a motel and pulled off the motorway. I drove past five or six, all full, before I gave up and headed for a quiet back street, resigning myself to a second night in the passenger seat. Five hours later as the pre-dawn grey grew brighter, I woke to a tap on the window from a passing policeman. You'll be surprised to hear that I don't actually sleep in my clerical collar, so I had some explaining to do. I must, after two nights in the car, have been looking fairly dishevelled – but he decided I was merely a lunatic Englishman rather than a potential terrorist. Off I set, reattaching my collar and heading due south for Denver where I would pick up the I70 which runs for hundreds of miles through the flat plains of Kansas.

As I turned east again outside Denver, the sun was rising ahead of me. As I looked in my rear-view mirror I could see it striking the Rocky Mountains behind and turning them the most beautiful shade of rose pink. It was an absolutely stunning sight, and I saw it for no more than a minute or two in a rear-view mirror.

Friday was a long day, and I

began to make mistakes. At one petrol stop, I managed to lock myself out of the car. A 'good old boy' was sitting outside the gas station – where I guess he sat for most of the day – who lazily uncurled himself and broke into the car with a piece of bent wire and remarkable ease. The problem was sorted within minutes, and I quickly forgot it had even happened. But I was undoubtedly getting tired, and there's not much difference between one mile and the next in Kansas. Even the local radio stations weren't gripping me as they had the day before. In my mind I was calculating everything, noting the miles, the average speed and fuel consumption – and most effectively of all taking sips of water every five minutes. Just lifting my arm up to my lips jerked me back to renewed wakefulness.

Drinking copious amounts of water meant I had to do something else fairly often. Fortunately virtually every intersection had a gas station nearby and every gas station in the States has a loo. But at one intersection, when my bladder was bursting at the seams, there was no sign of any garage. I could however see a number of cars parked by a nameless building a short distance away, which I thought must be a café of some kind.

I charged in, more desperate than I think I had ever known. I was slightly surprised to find a till in the entrance, but rushed past and found myself in a large hall with tables and chairs and a stage on which a number of girls were doing a striptease! 'So sorry, I must just use your loo', I called out and crossed in front of them – still with my collar on of course. Goodness only knows what they thought, but I thanked them as I left.

I hit 2,002 miles as my clock showed that another 24 hours had passed – actually 23 as I had crossed a time zone. By now I was aching with stiffness and thought I must find a bed for a few hours.

To be continued...

JONATHAN MEYRICK
DEAN OF EXETER

See Dean Jonathan Meyrick's video blog on our website
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Travel

Magical Bath has plenty to offer for a short break

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RELAXING: Visitors can take a dip in the rooftop spa, with views of Bath Abbey in the distance

WHEN I found out my Kent-born partner had never been to Bath I vowed to rectify the situation immediately.

Having spent numerous summers in the city at choir camp many moons ago, I had fond memories of Bath and was keen to return.

Under two hours away from Exeter by car or train, it makes an ideal city break destination.

Surrounded by rural countryside the historic city is nourished with iconic attractions.

We were instantly struck by its quaint beauty, with its exquisite architecture, golden stone crescents and ubiquitous Bath stone linking the streets together, it is easy to imagine Jane Austen socialising here.

Our first stop was, of course, the remarkably well-preserved Roman Baths. As Britain's only hot spring – rising to 46C – visitors have been flocking to the site for the past 2,000 years for its health-giving properties.

Wandering around the magnificent temple, surrounding bathing complex, and chatting to actors dressed in period costume you get a strong sense of what it must have been like centuries ago.

In the adjacent Pump Room you can actually try the hot spa water from a fountain. It's an acquired taste but packed with 43 minerals most people take the 'bottoms-up' approach!

Characterised with live piano music, crystal chandeliers and crisp linen table cloths, the Pump Room provides an excellent venue to take a break from sightseeing and enjoy afternoon tea and cake.

As a verified shopaholic I was

steeped in history, Bath offers a delightful city break that will leave you culturally and spiritually enriched, writes Hannah Hope



STYLISH: One of the rooms at Brooks Guesthouse

in my element in Bath. From High Street to vintage, there really is something for everyone.

En route to the city's Fashion Museum, boasting a collection of Princess Diana's dresses, we stumbled upon Margaret's Buildings, a unique street lined with boutique stores. Among beautiful Georgian architecture its retail jewels include galleries, designer clothes emporiums, antiques and a book shop.

Foodies really are spoilt for choice, with enticing and restaurants nestling around every corner. From eateries owned by celebrity chefs Jamie Oliver and Hugh Fearnley Whittingstall to charming cafes, there will certainly be something that

takes your fancy. Sally Lunn's, the oldest house in Bath dating back to 1680, is a shrine to her skill with buns.

Hosting a museum in the basement and a restaurant over three floors, the famous buns can be devoured as a sweet or savoury treat.

The city retains its vibrant buzz in the evening, so we headed to The Salamander pub to sink a few real ales, before enjoying some authentic cuisine in the award-winning Indian restaurant Rajpoot.

We stayed at Brooks Guesthouse – a boutique venue just a 10 minute walk from the centre of Bath, with 21 individually styled bedrooms.

Clad in designer fabric our luxurious room was equipped

with a flat screen TV, DVD player and iPod dock. It prepares guests for a busy day ahead with a hearty choice of breakfast fare. We opted for a full English breakfast made from locally sourced ingredients.

Making waves across the world the Thermae Bath Spa is an absolute must if you are in need of some relaxation.

Using the warm, mineral-rich waters which the Celts and Romans enjoyed over 2000 years ago, it is Britain's original and only natural thermal spa.

Boasting the warm waters and flowing curves of the Minerva Bath, multi aromatic steam rooms, bubbling foot-baths and a rooftop pool overlooking the city's stunning architecture Thermae Bath Spa really is a heaven on earth.

From the array of treatments, including facials, body wraps and flotation therapy, I enjoyed the spa's new Thermae Oriental Massage.

Inspired by international techniques, my beauty therapist rid my back of any knots with a combination of Swedish, Malay and bamboo massage.

The serene scents of the oils and organic products eased me into a warm stupor.

Our visit was over all too quickly, but at least I can take pride in the fact that I have introduced my partner to some home-grown culture.

Bath's Christmas market, containing over 120 individual festive wooden chalet-style stalls, pops up alongside Bath Abbey Thursday, November 25 to Sunday, December 12.

For more details visit www.brooksguesthouse.com and www.visitbath.co.uk

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