

## New Jim Gold Tour – Western Canada

This year a new tour was added to the Jim Gold lineup, the Western Canadian Tour. Led by Canadian Cathie Dunklee-Donnell; it included 2 maestro teachers, and 18 lucky participants.

The tour began in Calgary with plenty of dancing and early spring views of sun and snow. A tour of downtown Calgary included many views of stunning new and old architecture, with lunch above in the rotating Calgary tower.



The dancing started with after-dinner dancing at a Turkish restaurant. We enjoyed dancing Turkish dances and other folk dances as long as we could, until the restaurant closed.

The dancing continued the next two nights at a workshop with the Calgary Folkdance Fridays group hosting. The weekend workshop included many beautiful Albanian dances by Genci Kastrati and new and old dances from Lee



Otterholt. Local Albanians joined in and their children also picked up some culture and added to the fun.



We took a break in the dancing to visit the Unesco site of Head Smashed In. A Blackfoot docent-led tour proved to be very interesting and educational. We visited the museum as well as the starkly beautiful site where the Blackfoot people ran the buffalo stampedes for 6000 years.

Next on to the stunning sights of Banff and Banff National park. Just gorgeous! Snowcapped mountain ranges, emerald-colored lakes, and still-frozen lakes. Many of the group enjoyed a hot springs mineral bath pool while the lifeguard was wrapped up in winter coat and gloves!

A highlight was the 2-day luxury train trip through the Rockies. The beautiful views left one speechless. While we were enjoying the views, our fresh gourmet meals were served to us on white linens while our guides pointed out landmarks and wildlife along the way. We were so overjoyed with it all we danced in the aisles!







We arrived in Vancouver for the annual Lyrids festival. Our “own” Genci taught Albanian dances and shared Albanian culture. Steve Kotansky taught new and old dances spiced with historical information and interesting anecdotes. Lee Otterholt added to the teaching with an original dance. On Saturday we were treated with a Bulgarian folklore dance performance by costumed young dancers, beautiful and energetic. The festival was a great time with dances and meeting and greeting of old and new friends.







Next stop was Victoria. The bulbs were popping up among the lush green landscape; happy yellow daffodils and multi-colored tulips. The tour ended on a high note as we stayed in a particularly beautiful neighborhood of Victoria at a luxury hotel. More mineral pools with stunning views of the bay and thick robes to wrap up in afterwards.

My heart and soul were filled from 2 weeks of dancing and beautiful nature, all while sharing it with kind and interesting fellow travelers.

A smile remains in my heart.