Blue and Skye's Canadian Adventure

A rescue story from the road, By Vic A.

When we rescued Blue and Skye through German Shepherd Rescue of Northern California, we knew that we were gaining two loyal companions. What we did not know was just how ready they were for adventure. In 2025, my girlfriend and I hatched a plan to escape the Reno heat through July and August by driving across Canada— from Vancouver to Quebec and back— in our camper van with the dogs. We would get homes in a few areas to explore the bigger cities, but otherwise we planned on staying in the van; often in Walmart parking lots at the end of 500+ mile travel days.

I volunteered with GSRNC on-and-off from 1995 until 2023, when we moved to Reno. Karyn had 2 Chihuahuas and 2 Dobermans when we met in 2020, so she was no stranger to large breeds and what she might be in for.

At the time of our trip, Blue was a 7-yr old male GSD. He never actually made it into the program. He was a 10-month-old owner-surrender from Modesto I was originally going to foster, but pretty quickly learned that he was people-aggressive. He was the sweetest dog with my kids and me, but certain situations would set him off. Upon an evaluation by a trainer, I was told to "put him down, you won't be able to control him by the time he's two". When I broke the news to my daughter, who happens to share a birthday with Blue, she simply told me to "try harder". So, I did. When I first got him, Blue couldn't even be taken to a restaurant. But fast-forward 6 years, and I am happy to report that after much training and some growing up, he is the most personable, social, and well-behaved dog you will ever meet.



Skye was a 2-yr old female GSD at the time of our trip. When we adopted her in 2024, she was an 8-month-old stray living in Sacramento, 20lbs underweight, and eating rocks just to fill her stomach. Despite her past, she quickly integrated into our family. She was still a bit distrustful of strangers, which made her a bit of an 'unknown' at the start of our trip.



Our van (nick-named "The Dog Haus") is a 19ft Ram Promaster with a small bed in the back. The dogs love riding in back, where they can lounge and look out the back window. Our plan for dirt and hair mitigation was to put a blanket down over our bedding during the day, then remove it at night when it was our turn to use the bed and move the dogs to the van floor. As most of you might guess, it was a good plan in theory, but *nothing* stops GSD hair from getting everywhere! 😊 The dogs also tried sneaking up during the night. In the end, we compromised on an early morning cuddle session; with all 4 of us in the bed; we were stacked like cordwood!

We had a few big cities we wanted to explore, as well as Banff National Park, and also wanted to catch the last weekend of the Stampede – the biggest rodeo in the world, where 1.5 million people descend on Calgary. Our itinerary from Reno, in chronological order, consisted of one week at a house in Vancouver, five days at a campground in Banff, two nights at a Calgary hotel for the Stampede, overnights in Regina, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, and Sudbury, nine days at a house in Toronto, a week at a house in Montreal, overnighter in Ottawa, five days at a house in Quebec, then a night each on the return trip through London, Fort Wayne, Chicago, Kansas City, Denver, Salt lake, and back to Reno; all told it was 8,000+ miles over 7 weeks.



So, what made this trip unique, traveling with GSDs? First, we ate probably 90% of our meals outside with the dogs. When we arrived at a house, we parked the van and walked or took public transportation everywhere – the dogs traveled on countless busses, boats, and subways (ever try to get two GSDs up a moving escalator?!). Everywhere we went, we got the full range of reactions from people – from a woman in Calgary screaming bloody murder when the hotel elevator door opened and she saw the dogs, to multiple people in French-Canada exclaiming "Ooh-La-La!!" For the most part, people loved seeing the dogs (especially the kids!), asked to pet them, and often commented how they missed their own dogs and loved the fact that we traveled with ours. We never missed an opportunity to plug GSRNC 😊. We learned that Blue only eats French fries if ketchup has been applied, and is scared to enter a bathroom with a white tile floor. Skye wishes we could feed her the Canadian raw food brand "Big Country" here in the States. Her body is so long that she has a hard time hopping across rocks, and on hikes, she has the cutest little side-to-side wiggle. In Banff, we introduced ourselves to our campground neighbors, who quickly commented "well we don't know your names, but your dogs are Blue and Skye." Apparently, our recall is loud and frequent 😊.

The lowlight? Both dogs got skunked in the backyard of our tiny apartment in Montreal. It was 9:30pm at the end of a long day and dinner with my daughter, who flew in to sight-see with us for a few days. I let the dogs out, turned on the light, and saw the skunk, but it was too late. Windows all around us were flying open with Canadians screaming in French. Karyn and I high-tailed it to the pharmacy before it closed, to obtain the magic potion of hydrogen-peroxide, baking soda, and dish soap; though of course, that faint smell of skunk remained for the rest of the trip.



Through every mile, Blue and Skye were the perfect travel companions – neither long travel days, nor bad weather, nor anything else could dampen their moods. They weren't just along for the ride; they were part of every view, every stop, every routine, and every memory. Watching them explore new places with confidence, curiosity, and joy made us even more grateful for the organization that helped bring them into our lives.

We are thankful to German Shepherd Rescue of Northern California for the work they do to give dogs like Blue and Skye a second chance. Our trip across Canada was more than an adventure—it was a celebration of the life that we get to share with them. From van life to outdoor dinners to one unforgettable skunk encounter, Blue and Skye proved that rescued dogs do not just find homes, they help make every road feel like home.