Welcome to the 19th meeting of the International Argo Steering Team

Overview: Sidney is a small town on the Saanich Peninsula on Vancouver Island. The nearby large city is Victoria which is the capital of the Province of British Columbia. British Columbia is one of the 10 Provinces of Canada. The weather is likely to be cool, but for those who attended the meeting in Halifax, Nova Scotia, take heart it is extremely unlikely to be cold in the Halifax sense of the word. Here is a display of the climate normals by month:
http://climate.weather.gc.ca/climate_normals/results_e.html?stnID=118
This will be in the rainy season, please expect rain.

The AST meetings will take place at the Institute of Ocean Sciences which is here:
https://goo.gl/maps/iNzK7DpuVG22
There are NO hotels within walking distance of the Institute of Ocean Sciences, and public transit to the Institute is almost non-existent. We will be setting up a shuttle service between Sidney Hotels and the Institute, if you miss the shuttle service then please use a taxi.

Getting Here: The local town is called Sidney, and it is here that you find Victoria International Airport. There are legendary stories about people thinking they are heading here but ending up in either Sydney Australia or Sydney Nova Scotia. So when you book flights, please make sure you are going to an airport with the IATA code YYJ. It is also confusing to many visitors that though Victoria is on Vancouver Island, Vancouver is not on Vancouver Island. This led to one visitor booking flights to Victoria Island, which does exist and is in Canada but is in the high arctic. Do NOT book flights to that airport, please go to YYJ.

Victoria International Airport has non-stop flights from Vancouver (a 16-minute flight), Seattle, San Francisco, Calgary and Toronto (as well as some other minor airports). European visitors will likely fly from Amsterdam, London, Paris, Madrid, Rome, Frankfurt or many other airports to Toronto (YYZ), Calgary (YCY) or Vancouver (YVR) and then proceed to Victoria. Asian visitors can fly non-stop from Beijing, Tokyo, Seoul and many other centres non-stop to Vancouver, followed by the very short trip to Victoria. From YYJ it is a 7-minute taxi ride to any hotel in Sidney.

Here is a link to a pdf document showing all worldwide non-stop connections to Vancouver International Airport:

If you have time to take in some beautiful scenery consider flying to Vancouver, then taking a bus to the ferry terminal and taking the BC Ferry trip from the British Columbia Mainland (Tsawwassen Ferry Terminal) to Vancouver Island (Swartz Bay Ferry Terminal). It is a beautiful trip (in daylight) lasting 1h 40m with frequent sightings along the way of orca whales. From the Vancouver Island terminal (Swartz Bay) it is a 7-minute taxi ride to any hotel in Sidney. The ferries operate starting each day at 07:00 and the last ferry departs at 21:00. The food on board is poor.

The web site for Victoria International Airport is here:- http://www.victoriaairport.com/
The web site for the BC Ferries is here:- http://www.bcferries.com/

For entry into Canada most visitors will need an eTA (Electronic Travel Authority) some require visas. The web site dealing with visas and travel authorities is here:-
I have checked for each country listed as having members of the AST and my conclusions are:-
Citizens of the USA can enter Canada with a valid passport. No visa is needed and no eTA.
Citizens of Argentina and China require a visa.
For citizens of India and South Africa, an eTA may be sufficient or you may need a visa depending on some details.
For citizens of Australia, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, Norway, New Zealand, Poland and Spain an eTA (cost is Can$7.00) is sufficient.
To check whether or not you need a visa, click here: http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/visas-tool.asp?
To apply for an ETA click here: http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/eta-start.asp
The Institute of Ocean Sciences

The Institute of Ocean Sciences was founded by Dr. R. W. Stewart and opened its doors in 1977. It is built on the historical land of the Tseycum First Nation whose reserve is within 1 km of the Institute. Meetings will be in the Stewart Auditorium which recently received spectacular new doors carved by the husband of the current Chief of the Tseycum First nation. You will also get to use the new podium also by the same Tseycum wood-carver.

http://www.tseycum.ca/

Tourism

Vancouver Island is a major destination for tourism. Popular local visits are:

- The Shaw Aquarium in downtown Sidney - https://www.salishseacentre.org/ this contains a small but very beautiful aquarium. It will also be the site of Thursday evening’s public lecture by Greg Johnson.
- The Butchart Gardens - http://www.butchartgardens.com/ are beautiful at all times of the year.
- The Royal BC Museum - http://www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/ has a spectacular exhibit based on the lives and culture of the Canadian west coast first nations.
- Farther afield Cathedral Grove is a popular visit to see really huge trees http://www.cathedralgrove.eu
- Even farther afield, for those who might stay a few days longer in the area, consider a trip to Tofino on British Columbia’s very wild west coast. But beware of cougars, bears and tsunamis. It is an area of classic beauty. The Pacific Rim National Park is nearby. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_Rim_National_Park_Reserve The Wickaninnish Inn is listed as one of the Relais et Châteaux. It is a wonderful hotel with one of the finest restaurants in Canada (The Pointe Restaurant https://www.wickinn.com/restaurants-cafe/pointe-restaurant) https://goo.gl/maps/JUEfKhnSQv72 and https://www.wickinn.com/
- Should anyone come to the area a few days early there will be a performance of the Mass in B-minor by J. S. Bach, one of the supreme achievements of Baroque music. The concert will start at 7 pm on Saturday March 10th at First Metropolitan United Church at the intersections of Quadra and Balmoral Streets in downtown Victoria. If anyone would like to purchase a ticket (on 12th July 2017 the prices have not yet been set but probably will be about $30 each) then let Howard Freeland know.

Hotels in Sidney

All nearby hotels are in the small town of Sidney.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hotel Name</th>
<th>Approximate cost per night (Can$)</th>
<th>Hotel Web Site</th>
<th>Location on the attached map #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sidney Pier Hotel &amp; Spa</td>
<td>$210</td>
<td><a href="http://www.sidneypier.com/">http://www.sidneypier.com/</a></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Western Emerald Isle Hotel</td>
<td>$130</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bwemeraldisle.com/">http://www.bwemeraldisle.com/</a></td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney Waterfront Inn &amp; Suites</td>
<td>$165</td>
<td><a href="http://www.sidneywaterfrontinn.com/">http://www.sidneywaterfrontinn.com/</a></td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beacon Inn at Sidney</td>
<td>$160-$200</td>
<td><a href="http://www.thebeaconinn.com/">http://www.thebeaconinn.com/</a></td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedarwood Inn &amp; Suites</td>
<td>$130-$170</td>
<td><a href="http://thecedarwood.ca/">http://thecedarwood.ca/</a></td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES:
1) The prices of hotels are estimates from their web sites, prices are very likely to vary depending on how you make your reservation.
2) Howard recommends the Sidney Pier Hotel and Best Western, though he has never stayed in any of them as he lives in the neighbourhood.
3) The Beacon Inn at Sidney, is attractive but is more of a bed and breakfast in someone’s home than a true hotel. It has only 9 rooms.
4) The Cedarwood Inn and Suites has 42 rooms, but tends to get fully booked with long-term rentals.
5) The Sidney Waterfront Inn and Suites, the Sidney Pier Hotel and the Cedarwood Inn and Suites all offer sea views.
6) All hotels offer free WiFi.
1) Howard recommends Haro’s Restaurant in the Sidney Pier Hotel and Spa. They do wonderful “moules et frites” (mussels and frites).

2) The Beacon Landing Restaurant and Lounge is across Beacon Avenue from the Haro’s Restaurant, it is good pub-style food.

3) The Surly Mermaid is slightly north of the Sidney Pier Hotel and offers a tapas-like approach to meals.

4) A 30-second walk from 3) The Surly Mermaid is the Rumrunner Pub, which is a pub.

5) There are many other restaurants along Beacon Avenue, such as Sabhai Thai and Thai Corner.

6) Bistro Suisse does Swiss style cooking and is somewhat higher end for pricing.

7) The Best Western Emerald Isle Hotel has a “Smitty’s Restaurant” which some might like, but Howard says he would never eat there, it exists and it is cheap.

8) There are a couple of Greek restaurants, Odyssia (Beacon and Fifth) and Marias Souvlaki on Second Street.

9) My colleagues in the PICES Secretariat all enjoy “Fish on Fifth”, a seafood restaurant on Fifth Street, Howard has never eaten there.

10) The Woodshed Restaurant, also on Beacon Avenue, has pizzas.

11) Farther afield Sea Glass Restaurant (about a 20 minute walk from downtown Sidney) offers an attractive spot with good cooking overlooking a marina.

12) Substantially farther afield is the Deep Cove Chalet. You would need a taxi to get there. The food is superb and very much in the French style, the Executive Chef is Pierre Koffel, and the French style of cuisine comes naturally. It is an expensive restaurant and reservations are necessary.

   http://www.deepcovechalet.com/#/reservations-and-information

13) If anyone chooses to stay in Victoria, there is an endless supply of fine restaurants. Howard recommends Matisse, Vista 18 (on the 18th floor of the Chateau Victoria), Le Brasserie and 10 Acres Kitchen.
Map #1: For those who rent a car, this is the recommended route between Sidney hotels and the Institute of Ocean Sciences. As you can see, both Sidney and the Institute of Ocean Sciences are very close to the airport. If you are driving, pay attention should deer cross the road, especially at night, as hitting one does a lot of damage to a car.

This route is also a very practical cycling route with an excellent cycle path that is separated from traffic about 90% of the route. However, the bicycle shop in Sidney does not rent bicycles. Also, please note the weather will not be pretty.
Map #2: The location of hotels in the downtown Sidney area.