

Ormand Family Activity

June 2019: Pacific Northwest Adventure - Part I

We are on a long-term campaign to visit all the states in the Union. The states in the interior are usually on their way to somewhere else - to get to Chicago from Tennessee, the road goes through Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. But the states in the corner have to be destinations all on their own. Someday we will take a trip to New England, and Maine is *not* on the way to somewhere else (unless it's Nova Scotia). Oregon and Washington are like that - you pretty much have to dedicate a trip just for them. Now, we had been contemplating a trip through Oregon and Washington to Vancouver, take the [Canadian Pacific to Calgary](#), and then rent a car and return via Glacier National Park and Helena and Cheyenne. However, the plan for this trip is to see lighthouses, national parks, and state capitols - and Jerri has "passport" programs for all of these.

- US Lighthouse Society: uslhs.org/fun/passport-club
- State Capitols: visitthemallpassports.com
- National Parks: easternnational.org/what-we-do/passport

We spent weeks planning a schedule for seeing as many coastal lighthouses as possible, starting above Monterey where we picked up seeing lighthouses south to Los Angeles on previous adventures (see "Sequoia and Yosemite" and "LA & Sand Diego '11). Jerri has a great site - lighthousefriends.com - but this is for *all* the lighthouses in the US, not just the ones covered by the USLHS passport program. We make use of her site to locate lighthouses, and estimate how long it will take to get to them. Unfortunately, we have only an out-of-date paper list of the USLHS sites to guide our selection. At the same time, we plan a route to take us to major national parks (there are too many in this area to see them all) and the state capitols.

This will also be the first trip that Jerri and I take unaccompanied by our children. Faith has a job now with limited time-off. Charity has made a trip to Seattle with her roommate, but her roommate leans more to outdoor or sporty activities and had little interest in seeing museums or tourist spots like the Space Needle. Both of them can take off a few days around the Fourth of July, and therefore we coordinate (and buy airfare) for our children to meet us in Seattle.

Friday June 7 - Starting Out

The day arrives for our adventure to begin. The plan is to meet Jerri's dad and her visiting sister and her family for lunch before proceeding to Las Vegas. As always, we are late getting away. I intend to take the "usual" or "traditional" route to Las Vegas, which involves Grand Avenue on Phoenix, the funny diagonal road originally created to link Phoenix with Wickenburg, a town formerly much more significant than it is now. We take I-10 up to Phoenix and get off onto Grand Avenue near the big oddly-shaped Spencer's billboard.

Grand Avenue goes through a seedy part of Phoenix before getting to downtown Glendale and the younger communities of Sun City and Surprise in the northwest parts. In spite of it being US Highway 60, there are frequent stop lights in all the little districts and boroughs on the way out of town. Eventually, Phoenix finally peters out and it is smooth driving the rest of the way to Wickenburg.

Wickenburg is a central point in eastern Arizona, home to ranches and the famous Vulture Mine. Sometime, I want to return and explore, but Jerri isn't all that interested. After leaving Wickenburg north on US 93, we stop at a travel station for gas and a potty break. It seems Wickenburg (in addition to being a dude ranch happenin' place) is also the "Roping Capital of Arizona". There's a beautiful mural in the station of cowboys roping calves in the arena and a girl doing barrel-riding, with a huge Arizona flag as a backdrop. I also pick up a copy of Arizona Real Country (arizonarealcountry.com, apparently associated with a Wickenburg or west Phoenix radio station, 96.3FM) which is chock full of local-interest stories and horse culture information. US 93 goes a long way through beautiful Arizona wild country before hitting I-40 into Kingman. On the other side of Kingman, as always, I miss the off-ramp for US 93, overshoot, and have to turn back. Not a lot of places to turn around on I-40 west of Kingman. 93 carries us north to Hoover Dam and the Nevada border. Even out here, tall casino hotels beam their flashing neon beacons into the gathering night.

Our destination is the Flamingo Hotel, and Flamingo Road is a major artery from I-515 to the Strip, so I figure it's a safe bet to take. Sure enough, it takes us up to the Flamingo - almost. There's so much traffic and so many distractions that if you don't already know where you're going, it's tough to get there. After circling the block, I decide to just park it in the garage there, which turns out *not* to be the Flamingo's, but it's close enough to go into the hotel and figure out what's what. The lobby is crowded, and it takes a while to get to the counter (completely expected for a Friday night) and check in. Jerri waits in the lobby while I return to the car (via the hall to the parking garage, so I can establish a route) and transfer it to the right place. We have a fair bit of luggage, the Flamingo does not appear to have luggage trolleys, so we are already tired by the time we move the first armload of bags back to the hotel lobby where the elevators are. Then we discover something else: When checking in, the rooms are assigned closest to the elevators first-come first-served. It's past 11 by the time we get there, so our room is *w a y* down a maze of hallways. Dragging our bags all the way. And when we finally get through the door, I've got to trudge all the way back for the rest. It's past midnight by the time we are settled and ready for bed. And *then* I discover that our room overlooks a side-street with noisy bars! Even from the 11th floor, it's hard to get to sleep.



Saturday June 8 - Las Vegas



The last time we stayed in Las Vegas at the Golden Nugget on Fremont Street, we got a "cheap" room with no view. The room was perhaps a bit nicer, or at least a bit more ostentatious than this one, but this is pretty nice. Note the flamingo wall art.

The view is pretty good. You can see a little of the strip on the left (not shown). To the right is the pool area of the adjacent hotel, the Promenade street below, and the High-Roller Ferris wheel. Also not visible are the ziplines going down the Promenade; every so often some people zip by below the level of our window.



A little ways north is one of our current President's real estate holdings.

Looking down into the Promenade, I can see the main source of last-night's past-midnight noise.



The last time we stayed in Las Vegas at the Golden Nugget on Fremont Street, there was a crowd in the halls on the main floor, but the crowd waiting for the breakfast buffet wasn't that bad. At the Flamingo, there is a crowd in the halls on the main floor, and a long line waiting to get into the buffet room. Eventually, we do get to the desk, where we pay an exorbitant fee for the meal - although it turns out to be quite good, just not as good as at the MGM Grand or Caesar's Palace.



Nice view in this part of the dining room. We keep wondering why there is a line outside when there's all these empty tables in here. People outside exploring the habitat keep coming up to the exit-only door and trying to get in.

Big carp fish and exotic ducks pass just outside the windows. We stay in here long enough for the sunlight to creep over to our table and make it uncomfortably warm. Time to leave.



THE fountain. Kind of inactive; I figure the flamingo statues ought to at least be spitting into the big bowl. Maybe they did once upon a time.

Nice water features. Like other parks, the water smells strongly of chemicals to inhibit algae and other such.



Yes, there are actually flamingos at the Flamingo. The Flamingo was the first of the modern-style hotel-casinos in Las Vegas, the brainchild of mobster Bugsy Seigel, who struggled so much to get it to be a paying proposition that his associates thought he was embezzling from them and.. that was the end of Bugsy. Apparently his girlfriend Virginia Hill had long legs, and that's why he named the place Flamingo. Also, the flamingo is supposed to be a lucky bird (not lucky enough for Bugsy). Seigel

made quite a mark on Las Vegas; there are Seigel Realty signs and banners all over the place.

After looking around the Flamingo habitat for a little while (they also have some rescued pelicans here), we leave the hotel through the side door out into the Promenade. There are little shops and restaurants and snack places as well as some fountains and other decorative attractions. Sort of an outdoor mall. And ziplines. At the end of the Promenade is the entrance to the High-Roller. This is a giant Ferris wheel very much like The Eye in Orlando. It's also apparently a party venue (like most places in Vegas); we observe them wheeling a portable bar into the car ahead of us for a pack of silly girls. Our car is shared

with three other groups, but there's plenty of room. As it rotates slowly, we enjoy the scenery all the way up to the apex, where a good bit of the Strip is visible.



Looking north, we can see the cars adjacent to ours. The inside of the cars are not merely gimballed but motorized to counter the rotation of the wheel. I think Faith could enjoy this kind of Ferris wheel - no swinging or swaying, just an elevated wrap-around view.





Coming down, we can see the fountains at the Bellagio putting on a daytime show.

The first of many tourist photos taken against a green screen, with various backdrops placed during post-processing. The vantage for the background photo is further east. The hotel at lower left is the Flamingo. This is also the age of the cell-phone; the photo clerk couldn't make a print for us to carry away, and couldn't make a CD, so he gave Jerri a little card with a QR code to scan later and recover our photo. Jerri couldn't figure this out, so we had to wait until Faith the Apple Phone Expert was available later.



After exiting the High-Roller and passing back through the Promenade, we emerge onto the Strip for a look around. A little bit north is the Palazzo and the Venetian. The insides of these hotels are always a treat (and they're air-conditioned). Underground in the Venetian is a shopping mall recreation that's supposed to look like Venice, including a Saint Mark's Plaza with little tables outside the peripheral restaurants, and a platform in the middle where a little group is putting on a drama production with Renaissance costumes. Other little groups or quartets circulate the "streets" singing madrigals. And, of course, down the middle of the "street" is the canal, with gondolas.



Jerri and I take a gondola ride with another couple (from Costa Rica). The gondolier is singing various songs, including "Volare" - in Italian. Very pleasant, a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

I'm pretty sure the canal is underground. Certainly that simulated sky projected onto a vaulted ceiling. Further underground, the shops continue around an atrium featuring a giant "LOVE" art piece (of course, a lot of wedding groups were here for photos). There was an actual Venetian gondola on display, with some placards describing the vanishing craftsmanship to build these boats, passed down in a few families, and what the ornamental prow means.

www.luxrest-venice.com/en/blog/201610/venetian_gondola_meaning_its_iron_prow

On the way back out, we stop for dinner at the Trattoria, one of many (expensive) Italian places. We are unable to just relax at dinner, for we have to return to the Flamingo and freshen up in our room in order to get to our show in time. This is the last year Donnie and Marie Osmond are playing Las Vegas (at the Flamingo, another reason for us being here). It was a good show, mostly for an older nostalgia-driven audience. With a few surprises; we didn't know that Marie was a make-up artist, and there was a musical slideshow with her done up as various famous actresses and female celebrities. There are always musicians and dancers on stage with the main act, and so I wonder how many of them will treasure the memory of performing with Donnie and Marie.

Sunday June 9 - Journey to Yosemite

Today is going to be a long day. Can't sleep long, no breakfast here, and so the day starts with dragging all the bags all the way through the halls, down the elevator, across the lobby, down the hallway, and into the parking garage. We have a bit of trouble getting out of downtown Las Vegas and onto the freeway heading in the right direction, and after a bit of driving we get off in northern Vegas for a Denny's breakfast. It's Sunday, and there's a crowd.

Now, our original plan was to stay a night in Death Valley and see Scotty's Castle which we missed last time because it was closed due to flash-flood damage. It seems it's still closed, so that plan is out the window (meaning yet another trip through Las Vegas to Death Valley

sometime in the future). Instead, we will go past Death Valley and enter California on route 266 (turns into CA 168) and go north to Yosemite directly.

Passing through the mountain pass, we can see the snow-capped Sierra Nevada mountains.



Out in the valley, the awe-inspiring mountains stretch to the southern horizon.



We continue up the valley, stopping for a hamburger at Bishop. The plan is go enter Yosemite from the east on the Tioga Pass road, but when we arrive at the road, we discover that it is still closed due to snow. In June! (We are going to be surprised by snow in June

many times.) Our only recourse is to continue on and go around Yosemite on the north, through the Sonora Pass, come down south, and enter Yosemite from the south where our hotel is in Wawona. The road continues past the shores of Lake Mono, then bearing left, it goes up into the mountains on a steep, narrow road with lots of sharp switchbacks. Signs posted forbid the use of the road to trucks and RVs larger than a certain length. Then we enter the snow. Deep snow. Up, up to the Pass. On the other side, the road is less steep and windey. By the time we get out of the mountains to the towns in the foothills, evening is coming on, and by the time we get past the west entrance to Yosemite, it is night. At Mariposa, we stop for another eat-while-driving hamburger dinner. We are following the GPS directions, and it is telling us to turn off the main road onto a dirt road that says "no outlet". We stop and think about what to do, finally deciding to abandon the GPS and consult the paper road map. The "correct" way is to continue down highway 49 to Oakhurst and then turn onto the normal southern entrance into Yosemite. By the time we get to the Big Tree Lodge at Wawona, it is very late, but the manager is still at the desk. It is at this time that we discover that the Lodge (which is a big Victorian affair) tries to preserve a 19th Century "camp" feel: the rooms are just bedrooms, and the common baths and "water closets" are outside via the upstairs veranda.



Monday June 10 - Yosemite



After a restful night, the morning shines past our curtains bright and clean. We discover towels and bathrobes in the dresser. The door to the veranda is just outside our room, and the bathrooms are visible from there.

The bathrooms really are quite nice; four shower stalls with privacy curtains in the "bath" room, and sinks and toilet stalls in the "water closet" rooms. It is either early enough or late enough that there aren't any other guests lined up.

Breakfast is in the nice big dining room on the main floor. Tall windows with screen panels admit light and fresh air. The menu has a Victorian feel, also; the jam for the toast is in little silver cups.





We notice the lamps with the pine cones. Also the old timey oscillating fans (there's no central air in the building).

A view of Big Tree Lodge from outside. I take this while Jerri is in the Hill Studio getting her park stamp (Thomas Hill was a famous landscape painter in the late 1800s, and his studio now serves as a little museum and park information desk). The girl in the info center is more interested in reading her book than being helpful to visitors. Soon we are on the road into Yosemite, and we take the turn off to Glacier Point.



The trip at the posted speed limit (enforced by all the other cars ahead of us) takes the better part of an hour. We pass other outlooks and trailheads, all choked with cars. When we arrive at Glacier Point, we are dismayed to find a long line of cars waiting to enter the parking lot. Once in, the cars lurch slowly around the lot hoping to be in the right place for someone leaving. After one circuit and merging back with the line for a second pass, I let Jerri out to go see the sight, expecting that I will not find a spot and I will just pick her up when she returns. As it happens, I am inching along with the traffic when someone approaches my driver's window and tells me they are leaving and I can have their spot if I will block and let them back out. How nice! Soon I am joining the massive crowd at the Point, admiring the view and looking for Jerri.



I can't find her, so I return to the parking lot and discover her waiting for me to pass by in the car again. Now together again, we can go back up to the Point and get pictures of the side of Half Dome and the waterfalls on the Merced River and the snow-capped mountains above.

The Nevada Falls is upstream from the Vernal Falls. These majestic waterfalls are not accessible by auto, but there are hiking trails that go up there. I'm thinking this is the only way we will see these falls.





Close-up of the Vernal Falls, taken from a different (and less crowded) lookout that we stop at after leaving the Glacier Point parking lot (at which I return the favor I was given, for the benefit of someone else looking for a spot).

Panoramic view of the Sierra Nevada mountains that form the rim of Yosemite. All that snow. In June!



This is as much Yosemite as we have time for this trip. There are winter events in the fancy Ahwahnee Hotel down in Yosemite valley, so maybe someday we will be back (maybe having seen Las Vegas and Scotty's Castle on the way).

We return to the Big Tree Lodge with the expectation of lunch, but the dining room is already closed for lunch. We have to settle for some packaged refrigerated sandwiches at the nearby General Store before proceeding in the other direction, back south, to the Mariposa Grove for our other objective for this visit to Yosemite. Vehicle traffic is not allowed to the Grove itself; instead, there's a Visitor's Center where you park and then take a bus a few miles up the road to the Grove. This morning, in the hotel lobby, park status was posted that the Mariposa Grove parking lot was full; fortunately, by the time we get there in the afternoon, there's plenty of parking. Jerri goes into the Visitor's Center to get her passport stamps while I finish my cold sandwich, and then I join her at the boarding area. The bus pulls up, we get on, and then Jerri discovers that she left her water bottle in the Visitor's Center. We have to get off the bus so I can hoof it back down and enquire about her bottle, but they've already poured it out! By the time I get back to Jerri, the bus has already left, and we have to wait for the next one.

Up at the Grove, there is a round-trip hike of more than two miles from the bus terminal to the big trees at the back. Jerri does pretty well getting to the back of the Grove, although we meet quite a few folk who gave up before they got there. There are smaller sequoia trees before we get to the back, and here are some big ones just before we get to the turn-around:

The Bachelor and the Three Graces.



The big attraction at the Grove is the "Grizzly Giant", so named by Theodore Roosevelt when he visited with John Muir. Here I am out in front of it, with other trees and the little people closer to it in the background to provide perspective.





An obliging foreign tourist took our photo in front of the Grizzly Giant.

Another foreign tourist, of a group apparently from Russia or Eastern Europe, took our photo in the Tunnel Tree. I think this tree was an even more popular attraction than the Grizzly Giant, which I think is funny because those 19th and 20th Century types who cut the tunnel through this tree created a popular tourist attraction that would never be allowed in this age. A number of people we met returning back on the same path we were climbing saw the Grizzly Giant and then turned back without seeing what I think is the more interesting sight.





The tree is still alive, and apparently healthy. Sequoias can take a lot of damage and still flourish (witness the big fire scar on the Grizzly Giant above). Modern cars couldn't get through the passage sized for the Model-T cars of the day.

Most of the hike back to the bus terminal area is on unfinished (and sometimes barely discernable) paths. Jerri is feeling the effort, and has to rest frequently. As she is doing here, being dramatic on her sequoia throne.



The buses stop running in the late afternoon, and I figured we would be on one of the last ones back, but people are still arriving. I guess if the buses quit before those folk are ready to leave, they will have to hike the two-plus miles back down to the Visitor's Center. We return to the Big Lodge and a pleasant dinner. Near our table are two other tables, one with

adults and one with mostly young people, and with all the coming and going between the two tables, it is clear there is a large family group staying at the lodge. Back in our bedroom, Jerri discovers that the passport book she has is the demo from the Visitor's Center - she has inadvertently swapped them!

Tuesday June 11 - California State Capitol

The next day starts with another nice breakfast, even though the dining room is mostly empty by the time we get there (and some things on the menu are no longer available. Jerri then does her morning preparations while I return to Mariposa Grove and see if they still have her passport book. They do, and are glad to make the swap. Jerri is so happy to have her passport book back, and we carry our bags down the steps to the curb and I fetch the car. On the way to the parking lot, I notice that a couple who were sitting in the corner of the dining room when we left (after the breakfast time was over) is still sitting there. We load up, exit Yosemite, and backtrack over some of the route we took getting here, until we reach Merced and get on state highway northbound. As we noted in our previous Yosemite adventure, highway 99 goes through some of the most beautiful and productive agricultural area. What a beautiful state. Too bad the over-represented coastal leftists are making such a mess of California. Again, we see signs demanding a more reasonable water policy than the government (representing the rich coastal elites) is willing to allow.



Arriving in Saramento and taking the prescribed downtown exit, we encounter road construction. Of course. I studied the map before we left this morning (do GPS-dependent younger people do that anymore?) and had picked out a parking place, so it isn't too tough to get here. The second level of the parking structure has a nice view of the Capitol dome.

The visitor's desk (where Jerri gets her stamp) is downstairs, and the free tour starts here at the statue of Ronald Reagan. I'm amazed that the hard leftist government types haven't moved to erase the memory of Reagan.



I'm also amazed that they haven't erased the statue of Christopher Columbus requesting his commission from Isabella Queen of Spain. Still here in the Rotunda.

In the first of many Capitol tours, we are taken around the building to the significant spots including the House and Senate chambers. The guide explains how their representation works: The legislative districts are drawn strictly according to population. The counties don't count. Hence, the densely populated coastal cities have excessive power, and the inland agricultural areas have little influence. We also learn that the capital is Sacramento, rather than some other place like San Francisco or Los Angeles, because at the time, Sacramento had the largest population due to the gold rush in northern California. Sacramento is at the confluence of the Sacramento River - navigable, relatively placid, suitable for freight shipping - and the American River - treacherous, but where the gold was found. A considerable number of people die every year from drowning in the American. On the tour, we see murals of California history, including the California Republic, which lasted three weeks. Of course, they have the portraits of governors, and the story of the traditional

maximum allowable size of the portrait, and the portrait of Arnold Schwarzenegger that is practically larger than the others because he elected to forego the frame... just so his portrait would be larger! From the upper level, we can look out the window down the "mall" to the bridge over the Sacramento River. Our guide notes that John Sutter (at whose mill the rush-inspiring gold was found) is still honored by the state, but she doesn't really know why, since he was little more than a failed businessman.

The tour is over, and we are back in the Annex looking at the (California mascot) brass bear that Schwarzenegger found in some knick-knack store, bought with his own (considerable) funds, and installed at the Capitol where it has been ever since. The flower garland is in honor of a recently deceased legislature. The Annex was build after WW2, due to the burgeoning population, but it suffers from many defects including leaky plumbing, and it isn't large enough anymore, so there are plans to tear



it down and redo it. The walls of the Annex are lined with display niches for all the counties of the state and their notable attributes - again, I reflect on the glory of this magnificent state, and the bitter shame that it is being destroyed by leftist ideologues.



Leaving the city, we cross the Sacramento River, and see the bridge we viewed from the Capitol.

It's a relatively short hop on I-80 to San Francisco. At Vallejo, we take a brief detour to see the Carquinez Strait lighthouse - or what used to be the interesting and historic Carquinez Strait lighthouse before it was moved here to Glen Cove and vandals destroyed the lens. Now, it is just an office building, and since it is after 5pm, it is closed, and Jerri can't get her stamp (but it's available via mail).



I-80 crosses the San Francisco Bay via the Bay Bridge. Here we are on the bridge approaching the interesting suspended part.

The tower on the suspended part. I'm not sure why there are "normal bridge" segments and "suspended bridge" segments. Midway across is Treasure Island, which I recall used to be a Navy port but isn't anymore.



It's rush hour, and bumper-to-bumper freeway traffic until we get to US-101, and then it's a fast trip south past the airport to our hotel in San Mateo. The hotel is located in a dense residential area, and there are no visible restaurants. On the advice of the desk clerk, we

walk maybe three blocks south to the Holiday Inn that has a bistro-style restaurant. It's okay, and we catch a glimpse of how the (mostly hispanic) local people live: Small houses, and cars crammed into every available patch of ground.



Wednesday June 12 - San Francisco Bay

The Bay has been a commercial waterway for a few hundred years, and so it is no surprise there are several lighthouses at prominent features. Some of these are not accessible from land, particularly Alcatraz and Point Blunt on Angel Island. Jerri's research suggests that the best way to see these is from the water, and further research uncovers some boat tours of the Bay that purport to come within viewing distance of these lighthouses - including a sailing tour. Well, that's too good to pass up, so we sign up for a tour on Wednesday morning, leaving from Pier 39. On Tuesday evening, I do a bit of my own research and discover that it is possible to reserve parking on-line and get a discount.



We have to get up a bit early to make sure we arrive at the marina on time. Getting there is easy - shoot back up Highway 101 and get on 280, which turns into the Embarcadero. The road passes underneath the Bay Bridge that we were on just yesterday afternoon.

In the public transit arena, San Francisco is primarily famous for the cable-cars. We discover that the city runs historic trolleys up and down the Embarcadero, connecting the various piers and significant waterfront attractions. If I had known this in advance, I might have chosen a more remote parking spot. Or maybe not; it's all premium parking.



There are several different models running.

www.sfmta.com/getting-around/muni/historic-streetcars

There's a bit of a walk from our parking structure to Pier 39. On the way, we pass street performers after tips and are accosted by creative beggars. A young fellow presses a home-made CD of his rap music into my hands and asks me if I enjoy it to pass it around so he can get more exposure... and then asks me for a donation. He is very, very put out when I don't contribute for his "free" CD. Further down, some fellows are taking a survey and presenting "Just Smile" stickers to participants, and then asking for



cash to help with the "survey processing". I thought that was a pretty elaborate begging scam, so I rewarded their efforts (rather than the rapper). Along the way is this entrance to a now-demolished pier, complete with the rails for the cars used to move cargo when piers were used to load cargo (before the days of container ships). I originally think the ship framed by the arch is a freighter, and it is, sort of. More about this ship later.



The instructions for our sail cruise are to wait at Gate F for the boat's personnel to fetch us down. Turns out this is the gate to a small marina attached to Pier 39. Our fellow passengers slowly gather.

After a while, we see our boat coming down the marina channel. It docks just below the gate, and we watch the passengers from the previous tour debark. Soon the next tour is led down and helped onto the boat. The crew is two younger men, the skipper (who I guess is late 30s, early 40s, and a bit taciturn) and the mate (who is mid-20s and is more outgoing and actually engages with the passengers). They cast off and the boat moves back out of the marina into the open harbor.





As we are motoring out of the harbor area, we pass the maritime history museum, part of Fisherman's Wharf, where the USS Pampanito (a WW2 diesel submarine) and the Jeremiah O'Brien are moored for display. The Jeremiah O'Brien is one of two surviving Liberty Ships, the lightly-armed, quickly-built cargo ships used to shuttle troops and materiel to England during WW2. This is the freighter we saw earlier through the old pier arch.

After clearing the harbor area, the motor is shut off and the sails are unfurled. Now we catch some of that Bay breeze, the sailboat rolls over a bit, and the spray from our passage lands coolingly on our faces. This is a lovely 30-foot boat handled beautifully by expert sailors. Brings back memories of sailing with my best high school buddy in Virginia.



Alcatraz passes by at some distance to starboard. The mate assures us we will be back for a closer look.

The first leg of the cruise runs west, toward the Golden Gate Bridge. This is about as close as we get to it.



The boat jibes widely back to the east. It is dawning on Jerri that we are not going past Angel Island and the lighthouses after all. We shift over to the starboard side and get a closer look at Alcatraz.

The lighthouse tower is prominent on the east side of the island. Also clearly visible (but not in this photo) is the graffiti left by the Indians when they occupied the island briefly in the '70s. Furthermore, we see the tourists landing by ferry (also not in this photo) to view the facility on foot. We are both thinking that the Alcatraz tour might have been a better way to see lighthouses than the sail cruise - although there's no denying this has been a worthwhile and memorable experience.





Leaving Alcatraz behind, the boat approaches the San Francisco waterfront, offering us a real sea-level view of the tall buildings and the high ground of the city.

Close-up of the painted end of Pier 31 welcoming home - who? Fishermen? Or sailors returning from the War? Probably not the Alcatraz Ferry tourists, even though the ferry terminal is between Pier 31 and Pier 33 just to the north.



As we come past the pretty pier, we can look up Telegraph Hill and see Coit Tower.

Further down the waterfront is the old Ferry Building, still the terminal for most of the ferry traffic into the city and now a marketplace.



www.ferrybuildingmarketplace.com



A few minutes further down, the boat reaches the easternmost point of the cruise and turns around practically underneath the Bay Bridge.

The Bay is, now as always, one of the busiest paths for sea traffic in the United States. Here's a loaded tanker that we pass.





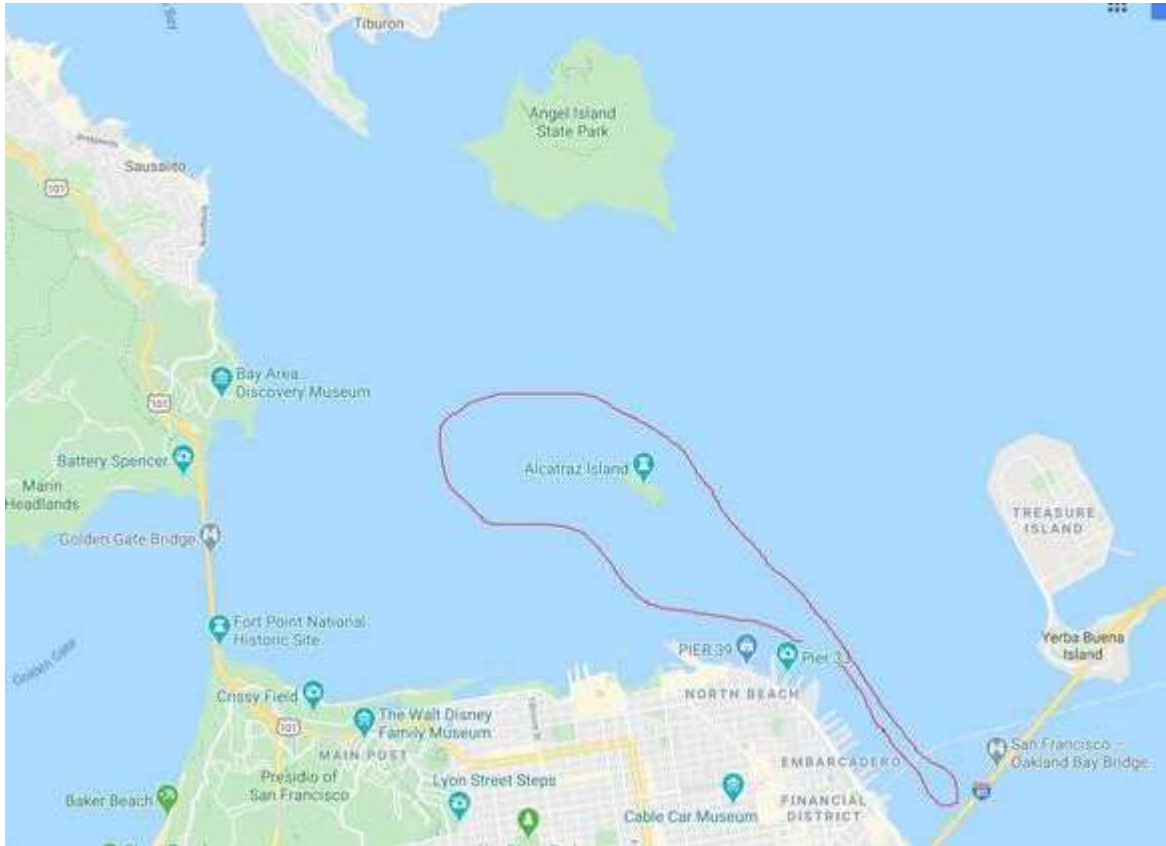
And a huge container freighter.

A beautiful catamaran sailboat passes portside.



A flock of pelicans fly by, just skimming the top of the water.

Now on motor power, the sailboat turns into the marina. Our cruise is over. It is disappointing that it didn't go any closer to Angel Island, but looking at the route afterwards, it is unlikely it could have gone any closer in the time allotted and still provided a tour of the Bay of general interest (the waterfront, the Golden Gate Bridge, Alcatraz, and the Bay Bridge). At some point in the future, we may be back to look at some San Francisco sights and then take the ferry from Tiburon to Angel Island and see the **THREE** lighthouses on the island by foot (or tram, or bicycle). angelisland.com



Just before pulling into our slip, I notice one of the boats in the marina is owned by someone in Mesa, Arizona!





Pier 39 is an amusement destination. In the center of the pier is a double-decker carousel.

The pier is home to a number of small shops. Of course Jerri has to peek in the Christmas shop. She is not inclined to get a pair of strange mer-people wedding ornaments. For which I am glad (even though I had to point them out to her).



Pier 39 is also famous for hosting a colony of sea lions. There are benches around these floating platforms where folk can sit for a good while and watch the behaviour of these huge animals. And listen to their noise. And smell their stink.

We drift out of Pier 39 and over to Pier 41 and check on the departure times for the bay tour

on the big cruise boat. We have plenty of time, and so we do a quick tour of the Fisherman's Wharf area, popping into tourist stores in search of postcards and small gewgaws. Lots of people around the Boudin Bakery and Cafe (famous San Francisco sourdough bread). Lunch is carry-out from Subway, sitting in a narrow pedestrian path, taking advantage of the public restroom (with an electronic lock, passcode available at the Subway), and a doughnut from the Krispy Kreme walk-up window. Soon it is time to get in line for the Red and White cruise. After a little while of standing outside, the ship is ready, and the excited tourist groups step up to get their souvenir photo before walking up the gang plank and selecting their multi-lingual audio guide radio set.

On the way out, we can view more of the San Francisco waterfront, including the Palace of Fine Arts.



Actually, while the experience on the large, multi-level tour ship with comfy benches and heating is a fun contrast with the sail cruise earlier in the day, it starts to turn disappointing in a different way. The closer we get to the Golden Gate Bridge, the thicker the fog gets. The narration on the headsets for all the stuff we could see except for the fog is useless and irritating, so I just take the thing off and enjoy the ride, including stepping outside a couple of times to feel the fog. By the time we are under the bridge, we can't see anything other than the vaguest shadow of the structure overhead. Good thing the ship has radar. Not much to see for half the cruise. That's the way it falls on San Francisco Bay.



On the return leg, the fog gradually thins until we are moving across clear water in bright sunshine. The masts and spars of the *Balclutha* loom over the red smokestack of the steam tug *Hercules* at the Maritime National Historical Park.

The boat docks and we file off, draping our headphones on the clothesline in the main cabin. Our day on the water of not seeing lighthouses and not seeing the Golden Gate Bridge is pretty much over. Upon getting back to the car, I discover that, if you don't check out at or before the end of the reservation, you don't get a discount. \$50 to park for the day near Pier 39. Whew.

We leave by the way we came. As the Embarcadero leaves the waterfront, it turns into King Street, and traffic gets real slow. We creep along and discover the reason - there is a game at Oracle Park (Home of the Giants), and the area is flooded with pedestrians! Eventually we work through the slowness, get back onto the two-level 280, and shortly after we are sailing south on 101. Jerri gets out the AAA tour-book and finds there is a well-recommended restaurant in downtown San Mateo. We haven't seen the nice part of San Mateo yet, so I am up for this. It turns out to not be too hard driving around in San Mateo, as long as you keep track of the one-way streets. We pass the address of the restaurant several times but see no sign of the business. Finally we park the van (quite a challenge, as the street parking is completely filled, but turning into a parking garage, we get lucky - twice, as after 6:00, there is no charge) and walk toward the address. Nope, not here. But next door to the purported address is a hip restaurant with tables on the street.

Jerri gets a pizza - and *scissors* to cut it with!
It was pretty nice outside, watching the fashionable San Mateo folk walking by, and the upscale grocery store across the street. The meal is nice, not spectacular - but it sure costs a wad!



Thursday June 13 - Santa Cruz

Today is a day of lighthouses. On a previous trip ([fam_cali16.pdf](#)) we saw our northernmost California lighthouse, Point Pinos near Monterey. On the other side of Monterey Bay is Santa Cruz, where there are two for-score lighthouses. There are several lighthouses to see, and they tend to close at 5-ish, so we get up early-ish and proceed south on 101, switch over to 280, and then pick up local route 35. It is an hour-and-a-half drive through a lovely hilly forest, descending at last to the coastal area and the little college town (UC Santa Cruz). There is a good bit of winding down narrow residential streets until we arrive at the dead-end on the west side of Santa Cruz Harbor. We are fortunate to find a curbside parking spot, and walk down the sidewalk along the channel, passing a dredging barge (with no work occurring). After a while, the concrete sidewalk ends and we continue on the sand.



Soon we catch sight of Walton Light on the breakwater.

Walton Light is no longer a guide to commercial sea traffic, but it is still registered with the Coast Guard and operates as a navigation marker for the Harbor.





Looking north across the bay. The gigantic concrete "jacks" that make up the breakwater are impressive.

Looking closer across the bay, we can see an amusement park on the beach. I'm picking up why students *really* come to Santa Cruz.



It doesn't take long to see Walton Light, and then we return to the car, retrace our route, and find the way to the other side of the town. There is a small state park at the point of land, and the parking lots are jammed with the cars of surfers who put on their wet suits and carry their boards down to the narrow beach.



In fact, the lighthouse is actually the Santa Cruz Surfing Museum. The story here is that a group of Hawaiian princes who came to attend school in the late 19th Century introduced longboard surfing to Mainland America. There are photos and stories of famous surfers who came through the area - including the results of shark encounters. Interestingly, when we visited Santa Monica a few years ago ([fam_cali15.pdf](#)), we found a different account of how surfing came to the U.S.

And yet it is still an official U. S. Lighthouse Society site, and Jerri gets her stamp. And some postcards.

From up here on the point, Walton Light is visible across the bay.



We leave the park and retrace the route to Water Street, which turns into Mission Street ("Camino Real") near the historic Mission Santa Cruz, even though I didn't realize it at the time. And then it immediately intersects Cabrillo Highway, or Highway 1, or the Pacific Coast Highway. It is my intention to follow the PCH all the way up as the means of picking up the lighthouses along the way. It is at this point that we pick up the PCH to go north. We had previously gotten on the PCH to go south at Monterey, so this is our point of continuity. (holycrosssantacruz.com/mission-santa-cruz)



After a nice drive up the coast, we arrive at Pigeon Point. It's a little while off the highway, and there are quite a few other vehicles here; we can't park in the small lot or off the road outside the site, so we park in the sand a little ways away and walk in.

Pigeon Point is one of the highest lighthouses on the California coast, and popular, but it is suffering from the corrosive effects of the salt air. The tower and oil-house are closed off, because not too long ago, a piece of the iron work broke off and fell. As a consequence, we can look up at the tower but we can't go up inside.





I am told that the iron member that broke off came from up here somewhere. Can't see it. But the modern beacon that replaced the original oil-fired lamp is visible under the unusual balcony feature. While we are in the gift shop, I overhear the workers discussing with happy anticipation the prospect of the state allocating more funds for restoration.

This is why the lighthouses were here. Pigeon Point isn't named after birds, but of the *Carrier Pigeon*, a Clipper ship that was wrecked at this point. The wreckage here was from another wooden ship that went down nearby and washed up near Pigeon Point.





The rocks that threatened shipping, which are the reason the lighthouse is here, are favorite resting places for sea lions.

The building behind the lighthouse was formerly the Fog Signal building, and is now a little museum. The lens from the tower was removed and placed here; I gather that the lens will be put back up in the tower after the restoration is finished, and the annual relighting will resume. This lens was originally the backup for Cape Hatteras Light, and reallocated here by the Lighthouse Service. The museum also has a "display" that plays the sounds of the four different kinds of fog signals emitted by lighthouses from after the introduction of horns (after bells, and even cannons).



Even though the lighthouse is on a state park, it is still owned by the Coast Guard and leased to the state. The other buildings on the site are used as a hostel. If we had known, we could have stayed here instead of San Mateo! (Except the bathroom is shared, so Jerri would not have been as comfortable.)



Further up the PCH, past Half Moon Bay, is the town of Montara, and Montara Lighthouse. It's hard to spot, and we actually go past and have to turn around to get back to it. Note "Lodging Available".

Parking is intended primarily for hostel guests, but we find an unclaimed spot at some distance and climb down the steep lot and the stairs following two girls carrying their bags. Here is the little lighthouse tower. Looks just like its little model on the sign!





We are obliged to check in at the office, which is in the low building to the left. Once inside, we have to wait for the two girls we followed down to register for their stay at the hostel. Placards on the wall declare that the hostel is intended to be international, for "World Understanding", open to all religions and LGBT-welcoming. When the girls get their key and move on down the hall, we talk to the office clerk who is glad to get Jerri her stamp and chat about the lighthouse.

The lighthouse, a cast-iron structure, was moved here from Massachusetts where it was no longer needed. It was originally primarily a foghorn, as the nature of the coast makes fog signalling more important and effective than the light. Note all the signs lining the road; they tell the story of the lighthouse, but some are weathered so badly as to be illegible. The little lighthouse is not used any more at all, but has been replaced as a navigation aid by a horn buoy way out off the coast. We can occasionally hear it hooting mornfully.



At this point, we have seen the lighthouses between where we left off previously in Monterey and San Francisco. The road back to San Mateo is over the highlands, with fog drifting through the valleys and over the road in the gathering dusk. We stop in the little town of Pacifica where we spot a grocery store, and pick up laundry supplies and some dinner fixings. Upon reaching the hotel (and parking in the garage underneath the hotel), the laundry is started in the hotel guest facility after we pick some abandoned articles out of the washer. While the laundry is running, we dine on pre-packaged salad, chicken parmesan cooked in the microwave, and pizza left over from yesterdays dinner, and plan the next day's adventure.



Friday June 14 - Golden Gate

Today is supposed to be the day of seeing the last lighthouses in the San Francisco Bay. We say goodbye to our San Mateo hotel that has been the base of our coastal adventures thus far and get back on the 101. In theory, to get where we want to go, we just stay on route 101. In practice, after entering the city, the 101 freeway ends and we have to try and follow the signs. 101 is Van Ness Avenue and then turns left into Lombard Street. San Francisco isn't as crowded and confusing as Chicago, but it's still a challenge, especially with all the construction and detours. Not to mention the distractions of looking at the sights in the city. It is a little scuzzy and dirty, and the influence of the LGBTQblahblah agenda is obvious everywhere, but there are a lot of pedestrians, and I keep thinking how interesting it would be to join the crowds on the sidewalk. In good time, the 101 bends right and enters the military reservation - the Presidio of San Francisco, aka Fort Winfield Scott, now a large city park. Staying on the 101 would cross the Golden Gate Bridge, and just before the bridge is an exit. Winding slowly past the Golden Gate visitors' center and what I take is the former officers' residential section, the road turns to the right down to the water. We have to wait for little gas-powered rental three-wheel buggies and lots and lots of cyclists, but we are ultimately fortunate to park right by the water within easy walking distance of Fort

Point.



The architect took pains to put the great steel arch right over the old 19th century fortress. The lighthouse was formerly an important marker for navigation into the Bay, and was in service up to the time the bridge was built; now, the lights and radio beacons on the bridge serve the purpose, and the lighthouse is of purely historical interest.



Fort Point is the last brick fortress, already obsolete when it was built, unable to survive the exploding shells fired at high velocity by the rifled cannon that started to appear during the Civil War. Service at the fort was considered a "hardship post" due to the damp and the cold. The fort was regarded as an important defense of San Francisco and the flow of gold to the Union. There's lots to see at the fort, but our lighthouse-centric schedule does not permit.

Speaking of maritime traffic, a huge container freighter steams under the bridge.



There's a set of waterfront structures at the junction back to the main road, and we stop there (parking is a real challenge here) to use the restroom and visit the gift shop. The road back continues underneath the 101 southwest through the park. Lincoln Boulevard turns into El Camino Del Mar and continues through a posh neighborhood with unexpected split lanes and tight turns. The next objective is Mile Rock, and the lighthouse tour directions say the best view is a point within Lincoln Park. We are surprised and dismayed to find the road into Lincoln Park is closed for construction! Not giving up, we turn left/south on the nearest street. It's a steep hill! I am hoping the brakes hold.



On the way down, I notice some colorful steps going up to the park at the dead end of a street (California Street?). Once again, I am reminded that there are so many treasures of cities to visit that are not on the tourist guides and can't be seen except on foot and when you have more time.

Photo from www.lincolnparksteps.org.

We turn right at the street at the edge of the park, and continue along until the main entrance to the park. Nope, also closed. What a shame; there were other things in this park to see besides the lighthouse, including the Holocaust Memorial and the Legion of Honor Monument and Museum. But then, those would be just more things we don't have time to look at. Really, a tourist could spend a lot of time in San Francisco without bothering with the usual sights (like Fisherman's Wharf and the Cable Cars).

Continuing, we get to the western edge of the park, There's a road, We follow it. It says something about Fort Miley, but there's a parking area at the end, so we stop and see if we get lucky.

Jackpot! There is a fine view of Mile Rock. Not that there's much to see. It's a working navigation aid, but the historic tower and light have been removed, leaving just a helipad.



But also at this parking area is a memorial to the USS San Francisco, a warship that saw action during the critical battle of Guadalcanal. There is a monument to the servicemen who lost their lives on the ship, including the captain. The bridge from the ship was relocated as part of the memorial, with the holes torn by shells still evident.

Retracing our route back along the south edge of the park, up the steep hill, back along the windy neighborhood road, and through the Presidio park, we get back to the visitor's center. The parking lot is still packed. There's no point in trying to get in, so it's back up to 101 we go and across the bridge. It is thrilling to drive across the Golden Gate, a long ways over the water. On the other side is another visitor's center, and we are fortunate to find a parking spot. There's a path down to the bridge.

Jerri on the Golden Gate Bridge. It's really windy; I didn't bother to bring my hat. There's also a lot of bicycle traffic up here, and we are constantly having to jump aside at the sound of either a bicycle bell or a rude "Outtadaway!" We walk a long ways out, past the first tower, looking out at the water and the city and up at the towers and over at the ceaseless flow of vehicle traffic. And out at a party of windsurfers who are way, way out from the land.



And down at Lime Kiln lighthouse, the navigation marker at the north end of the Golden Gate. Also supplanted by the navigation aids on the bridge.

On the way out, we can look down and see the chain-link fencing intended to bar suicides from jumping down on the land. I can't help noticing there isn't anything preventing them from jumping off over the water, where the fall would probably kill them and the cold water certainly would. I notice a suicide hotline sign, an acknowledgement by the city of the seriousness of the problem.



Back at the visitors' center, there is a platform with a great view of the bridge and the Bay. A beautiful schooner sails past.

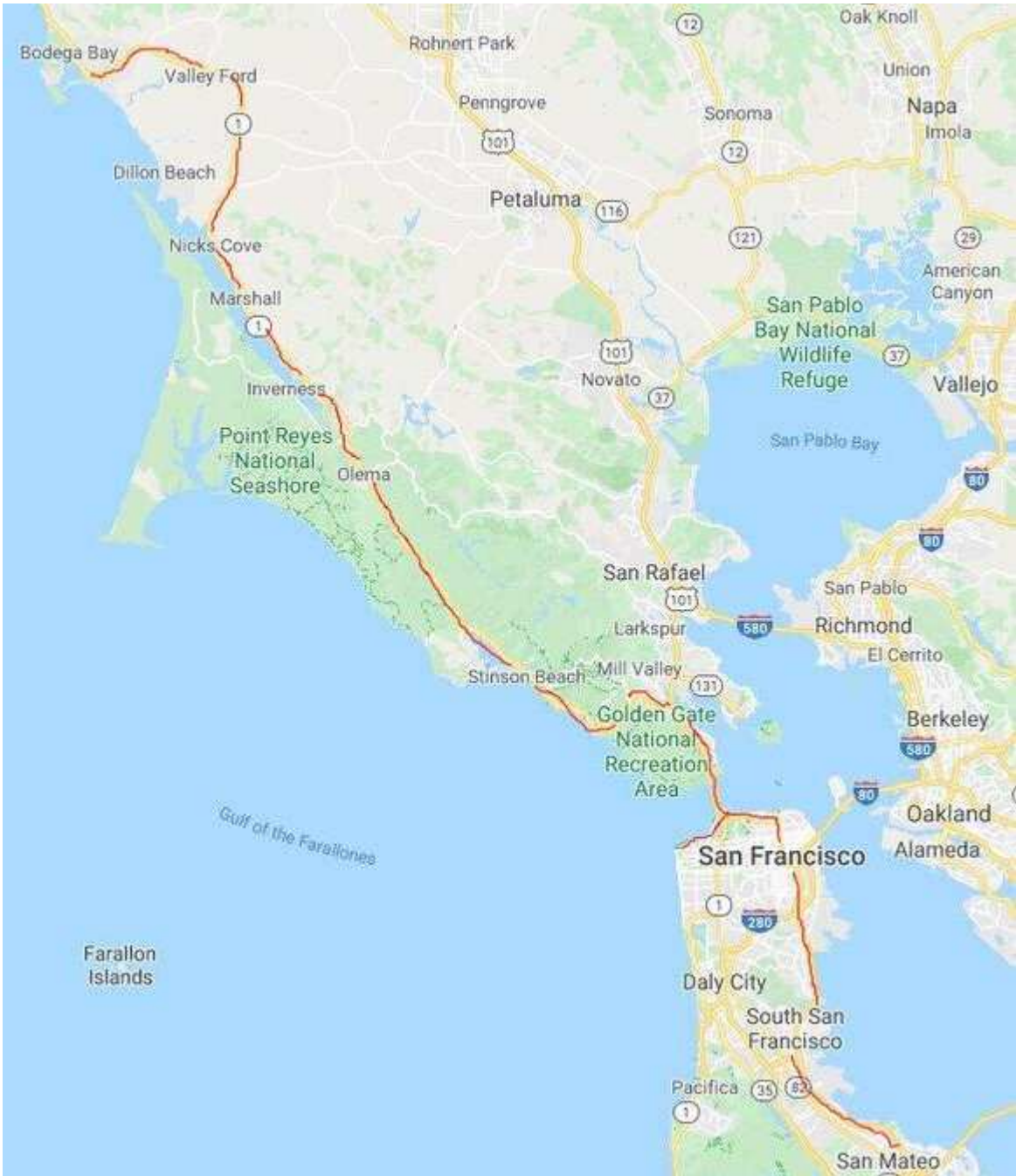
On the other side, swathed in fog, is the city we have now left.



Things get a little confusing after this point in time. The nearest significant lighthouse is Point Bonita, but it isn't open now, so we don't bother. Muir Wood has been recommended to me by a workmate, not far from Highway 1. Traffic on the PCH on Friday evening is impossible with all the folk leaving for weekend holidays. Arriving at Muir Wood, we are shocked to learn that parking is by reservation only, and we don't have one. The parking guard is nice enough to let me loiter in a corner while Jerri walks in to the visitors' center to get her stamp. After a bit of thinking, we decide to change our plans to return tomorrow to see Muir Wood and Point Bonita, and for now to proceed to the Point Reyes lighthouse. We return to Highway 1 and continue northwest. There's a pretty little town on the way, Stinson Beach, where we hope to find some lunch. We certainly find a crowd, and finally a parking spot not far from a cafe. Expensive "fancy" lunch.

Back on the road, past a swampy lagoon near Bolinas, finally getting to Olemas and the Bear Valley visitors' center, where we learn that, as we feared, the Point Reyes lighthouse is still inaccessible for restoration work. Onward north on Highway 1, it is getting dark by the time we arrive where our hotel reservation is for tonight: Bodega Bay.

It is a bit hard to find the inn, as the GPS doesn't understand the address and its best guess is clearly wrong. When we finally get to the right place, we find the lodge is... interesting; the lodge consists of four-unit buildings, and ours is upstairs. We have to drag our bags up the stairs (not for the first time, not for the last, and nowheres near as bad as the Flamingo). In the room, we find a complementary bottle of locally produced wine. The lodge is also remote, and the only practical dinner spot is at the lodge main building. It's a nice "fancy" dinner, with white tablecloths and candles. I succeed in making parking reservations at Muir Wood, but asking at the desk I am told they can't print it, "not in Bodega Bay".



Saturday June 15 - Point Bonita



It's easier to take photos in the morning light. The room isn't particularly fancy, considering the \$400 we're paying for it.

From the window, we can see the Bay. This is why it is so expensive - a little inn on the Pacific Coast Highway, on the seaside, a holiday destination.



The hotel benefits include a discount coupon at The Tides, a restaurant (and fishing depot) right across the road right down on the water. We check out (taking our bottle of wine with us) and park outside The Tides. Breakfast is nice, and our table is right at this window overlooking Bodega Bay. We can see the channel markers, ducks swimming around and plunging under the water for food, and a pair of kayakers paddling past. Jerri stops in the gift shop, and when she makes her purchase,

the cashier has trouble with the credit card machine and it is a l_o_n_g time before we can

leave. When we do, Jerri has a scare - where is the lighthouse passport? It doesn't appear to be in the car, and I return to the inn to see if housekeeping found it in the room, but I am told they did not. Upon a closer search, it is found in the van under the seat.

It is clear that reserving a hotel in Bodega Bay was a mistake. It was expensive, and now we have to go 1-1/2 hours back down south to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). We are *not* going to waste the time going back down the pokey PCH; instead, we proceed east on a rural route through rolling hills to the small city of Petaluma, which I note is a nice small place, lots of history, very appealing. Another place worthy of some visiting time - which we do not have. Here, we pick up the 101 back south and take the exit for the Golden Gate Bridge visitors' center but continue past it westward into the GGNRA. This was formerly a military reservation, and the visitors' center is housed in a former Army office. There are some useful exhibits there, some postcards to buy, and a very helpful ranger who advises us with directions to Point Bonita,

The parking lot at the end of the specified road is full, so I have to leave the car by the side of the road after dropping Jerri off at the path. The path goes by Battery Mendel. Like Fort Winfield Scott on the other side, the northern approach to the Bay was well-protected by coastal artillery. This installation was built in 1905 to house two "disappearing" guns, which were elevated over the parapet to be fired and then lowered back down to be cleaned and reloaded. While partially restored, we can look through the barred doors into the rooms and see graffiti and broken bottles.



On the other side of the path, more artillery fixtures are visible, Battery Mendel was from an earlier period, WWI era, and I believe these batteries are from the WWII era, with thicker concrete and built for bigger guns.

At the end of the path is Bird Rock. Looking to the east, we can see the former location of the Point Bonita lighthouse. Now, there is a radio beacon and the remains of a foghorn building.



Here's a comprehensive photo. The lighthouse was originally at the top of the rock, for altitude, because that's what east-coast lighthouses need. Then it was discovered that lighthouses here really work better closer to the water, below the fog level.

Turns out the lighthouse is available for visits, via a tunnel cut in the rock and then a long plank walkway, and wouldn't you know it? Not open today. The lighthouse guide website is wrong about Saturdays. This is as close as we can see it. Yep, that's a lighthouse all right.



Returning from Bird Rock, we pass these domes. These are the original artillery direction observation posts. Officers would enter the fortified bunkers underneath these domes and open observation ports to take readings on the target. With multiple posts (two shown here), the readings from each post could be combined to triangulate on the target and produce a firing solution.

From the parking area (and over another of the observation post domes), there is a great view of the Golden Gate from the sea side and the city beyond.



We leave the GGNRA on the one-way road back to 101. The way is crowded with weekend visitors, cars parked in every conceivable place, pedestrians walking to scenic overlooks, and security people directing traffic and preventing unsafe parking (mostly). I'm glad we aren't stopping here, even though the views are indeed striking. We make it back to the 101 and get off at the *next* exit to Sausalito. There is a marina just below the exit, and we stop at a cafe for lunch. Just outside the window, we can see Mike's Bikes and the people renting bicycles to peddle around the marina. Very nice. After lunch, we proceed to the Highway 1 exit and retrace our route from yesterday. Traffic is not as ridiculous as it was yesterday, and we get to Muir Wood just as our 4:00 parking reservation time slot starts (30-minute starting times, 1/2hr or 1 hour, or 1-1/2hr durations - we take the 1-1/2hr option - and you can get an Annual Pass).

Our parking reservation (displayed via cellphone) is accepted, we find a parking spot, and soon we are walking through the Muir Wood entrance together.



Muir Wood is a grove of giant redwood trees. Redwoods are related to sequoia trees but are slightly different; they grow easier and faster, they like places with lots of water, and they grow from either seeds or as suckers off the main root. In many cases, the redwood trees form clusters that are essentially joined at the base.

Nice path, splits into parallel tracks here about 2/3 into the park. Other paths fork off the main paved path to run up along the slopes of the canyon containing the grove. Lots and lots of foreign tourists here. We seem to run into foreign tourists more in these natural places than in touristy places in cities.



Redwoods also generate "burls", these tumor-like growths off the sides of trees. Burls are frequently another site of shoots growing off a parent tree.

Way up in this tree is a huge burl.

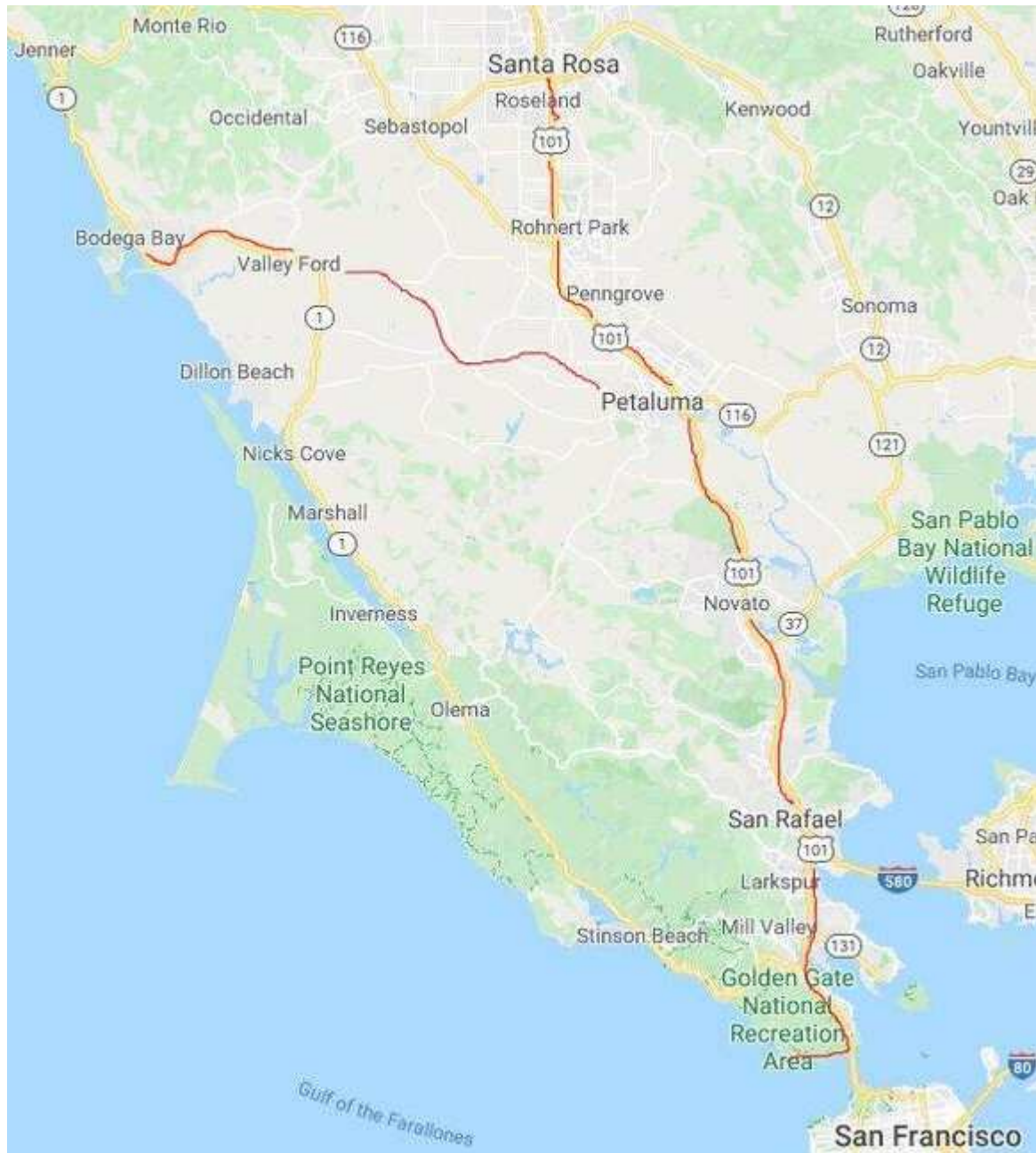


Beautiful place. Cool, quiet. Lots of people, but not crowded or noisy. Worth the visit.

At 6:00 (okay, past the 1-1/2hr reservation, but no consequences), we have seen the grove and the stream that runs through it, and seen the visitor's center and gotten more postcards. Again, we've already seen the PCH up to Bodega Bay, we don't need to deal with that again, so we backtrack to Highway 101 and zoom up to where we made an alternative

reservation last night: Santa Rosa. A Travelodge. But the GPS takes us to a place in Santa Rosa that we drive back and forth, round and round, lookign for a Travelodge and find none. Stopping and beating up the GPS and checking the map via cellphone, we discover there is another Travelodge in Santa Rosa, and how to get there. When we arrive, yes, this is the one that has our reservation. Silly. What did people do before cellphones and Internet access? Probably planned better.

The Travelodge is a classic motor court, a single-story ring of rooms around the parking lot and pool and office. There is a Target just down the road, so I can go and get water and a Father's Day card and pick up Wendy's on the way home. When I get back, Jerri discovers that the window server at Wendy's gave me the wrong kind of salad. Back I go. At last I can rest and try to recover my sore back that I injured lifting the bags out of the van.



Sunday June 16 - Point Arena

The next morning is a relaxed arising and a late departure. The breakfast stop is Denny's. On Sunday morning. On Fathers' Day. It is a long, l_o_n_g wait for a table. Afterwards, we leave Santa Rosa for Point Arena. Mapquest has suggested that the fastest route - which is still 2 and a a half hours - is to proceed north on 101, then over to local route 128, and then an overland hop from Boonville to the coast. This goes fine - until we start on this little road out of Boonville. What a terrible road! Unpaved, hairpin turns through the hills, sometimes down to one lane. California's answer to the Apache Trail, but without the scenic drop off the side with no guard rail. Well, there's still drop-offs and there's no guard rail,

just not as steep through the trees to the creek below. The bulk of the 2.5hr travel time is spent on this dreadful road. At last we get to the coast, and Point Arena.

Taking this route was supposedly faster, but it cut off a good bit of Highway 1 that I would rather have taken. Except for the memorable adventure of the road from Boonville to the coast, looking back with hindsight, I would rather have taken route 116 from Santa Rosa directly to the coast and picked up Highway 1 just north of Bodega Bay. Oh, well.

In addition to being a dangerous place that needed a light (the Arena Reef was the cause of many shipwrecks), the location was primarily a loading point for lumber cut from the forest we have just emerged from. Lumber (and passengers) were lowered to the ships waiting in the cove on cables. How exciting! Even more so, the logs were transferred from the forest via *flumes*! I always thought the water rides in amusement parks were based on some very flimsy historical precedent, but now I learn, no, they were real, and they went for *miles* from the forest to the seaside. There were some photos that gave just a taste of the scale of the flumes. Afterward, I note that there is a town called "Flumeville" between the town of Point Arena and the lighthouse! I think I understood that formerly, logs were floated to the coast on the Garcia River, but as the forest was cut back, erosion allowed more sediment into the river, which silted up and changed its course away from the cove.

There is evidence of erosion all around, and the appearance of sinkholes. It seems that the original lighthouse was damaged in the Earthquake of 1905. I had heard of the tragic earthquake that affected San Francisco (mostly with fires) at the turn of the century; now I learn that people hear about San Francisco because it is a bigger, more significant city. San Francisco isn't even near the fault that was the epicenter of the earthquake. Santa Rosa was much closer - and it was destroyed! The damaged lighthouse that we see now was rebuilt of reinforced concrete, in a record two years time.

The tower is a tall one, almost as tall as Pigeon Point, but *this* one we can go up in. I notice a sign nearby warning us to be aware of the lighthouse cat - Arena Mina.

We don't see her.





Spiral staircase winding up. There are four flights of 540-degree stairs, ending in half-moon landings where we can catch our breath. The pipe is for electrical service, added after the tower was built. The empty cylinder just right of center is the tube through which the weight descended that operated the clockwork for rotating the beacon. The stairs end in the Machinery Room, and a ship's ladder goes up to the lens chamber.

Official photo of Jerri at the top of Point Arena Lighthouse. Behind her is the foggy northern California coast.





Outside is the LED cluster that replaced the oil-fired lamp. It is actually running now, and I can see it blinking unimpressively every so often, and yet this little light outperforms the original Fresnel lens lamp.

An idea of how tall the tower is, looking down at the fog signal house, now the gift shop and museum.



The appearance of the coastline. Note how quickly the erosion advances, that the fence must be realigned to avoid the gulches. Soon it will cut across the road. Eventually, the tower will be undermined, and the guide says, "then we will just build a new lighthouse nearby."



In addition to looking through the glass windows of the lens chamber, you can go outside in a parapet through a door in the Machinery Room. Very breezy up here. And cold.

Looking down the spiral stairs.



After getting off the stair, I notice the mark on the bottom step: "Calvin Nutting and Son, Maker, 1869, San Francisco".

After finishing our tour of Point Arena, we want to hurry up the PCH past Mendocino to the Point Cabrillo lighthouse before it closes. Arriving at the Point Cabrillo Light Station Historic Park, we find that we must leave the car in the parking area near the road and walk about a half-mile to the lighthouse.

As we approach the lighthouse, we pass by the keepers' cottages and note they are available for vacation rentals. I also notice the light is lit inside the lens and the lens is rotating. The bright beam flashes every so often, but the rest of the time, the light from the setting sun sparkles in the facets of the lens. It's as if a huge jewel were turning in the tower - it's charming, but also a bit spooky.



Inside is the little gift shop and museum. We have a great visit with "Lighthouse Laurie", who moved to the area and keeps cats. She is a former Air Force dependent (like me), born in Tucson (like me, wow, small world!), and spent time with her family stationed in Okinawa (not like me). She is also a conservative Christian, and so we commiserate with her some about living in leftist California. She has a great map/guide of the California lighthouses, but alas, it's not for sale, it's out of print, and so all we can do is look at it.



Closeup of the tower and lens. Note the "real" beacon off to the side. Point Cabrillo is a real navigation aid, and owned by the Coast Guard, but the CG lets the volunteer staff do everything.

Looking at the back of the building, the foghorn emitters stick up out of the roof like old phonograph funnels. Once again, the lesson is driven home that fog is a worse threat than darkness, and audible (and now radio) beacons are more useful on the northern California coast than lights.



As we leave, we stop in at the little unattended marine life museum. Half of it is handle-and-touch, and coloring sheets, aimed at children. The other half is aquarium tanks with shellfish and anemones and sea slugs. And an explanation of the lifecycle of abalones. Very interesting.

For dinner, we backtrack a few miles to Mendocino, and find a quaint little cafe serving (no surprise) "fancy" (expensive) fare. It's still quite good. Mendocino is a very small coastal town on a steep hill down to the sea, and is obviously dressed to appeal to typical California tourists - lots of little curio shops and yoga studios and bookshops and art galleries. Might be fun to visit more at length, but pretty much everything is closed already and we don't have time to dwell. I take this photo of the unusual civic sculpture on top of what looks like a bank building.

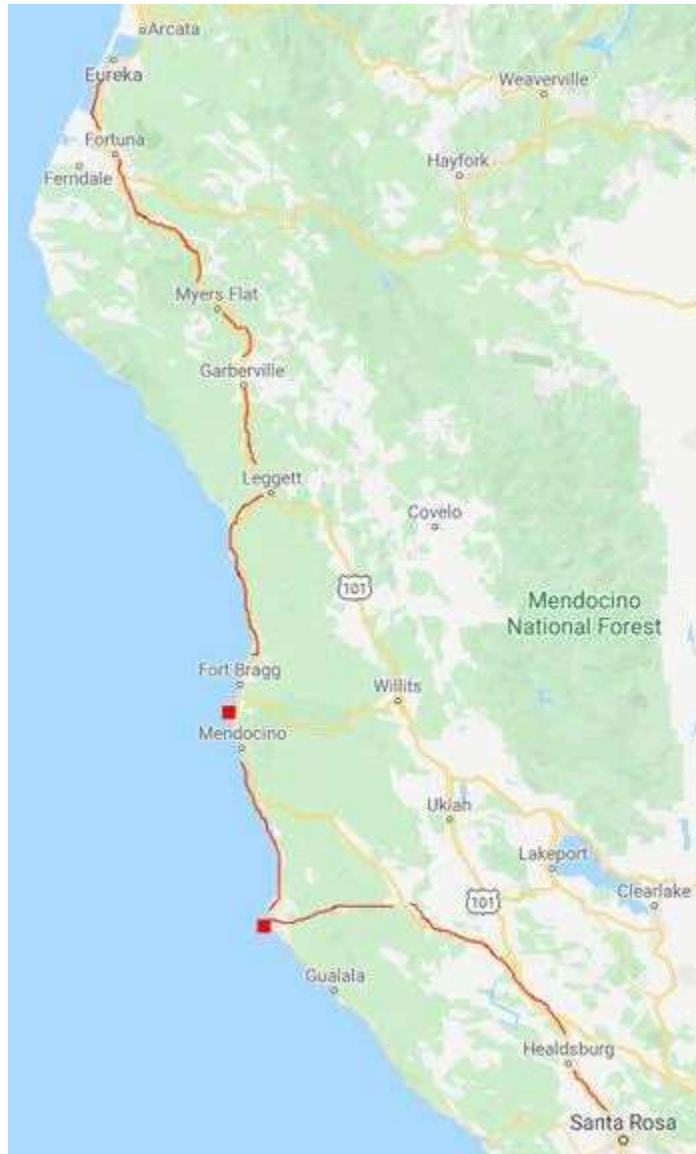


The Pacific Coast Highway continues on up the coast for quite a ways before it leaves the

coast and turns inland. It bypasses the bulge into the Pacific at the northwest corner of the state. This region is apparently known as the "Lost Coast". There are few roads into it, and few towns. As Highway 1 bends away from the sea, the evening fog is rolling in off the sea, and we experience driving through it for stretches.



Highway 1 is very windey through the hills, and doesn't run very far before it ends by merging into Highway 101. The 101 is a funny road, very narrow two-lane roadway with low speed limits in parts and a proper highway in others. Our evening objective is Eureka. Arriving at the hotel, the parking lot is jammed, and I have to *very carefully* maneuver the van into perhaps the last available spot at the back next to a large panel truck.



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It's a pretty nice hotel. The breakfast room is in the pool area. The pool area is built up of volcanic rock with tiki torches stuck here and there and a waterfall in the hot tub and another in the kid pool area. Billiard table, padded lounge chairs. There were tables outside nearer the pool and more in the "island" theme zone, but we stayed inside.



The first lighthouse site is on Woodley Island, just outside Eureka in the channel between Arcata Bay and Humboldt Bay, in the parking lot of the marina. This is Table Bluff Light. The original lighthouse site at Table Bluff was some distance south of here, at the south end of Humboldt Bay on a cliff over the ocean. When the lighthouse was decommissioned, the tower was moved here.

Not that it's much to look at. Kind of sad, really. But yes, it is still operating as a harbor marker. And it's worth a stamp to Jerri.





Also on Woodley is a memorial to commercial fishermen lost at sea.

Probably the point of interest that Eureka is more known for, more so than Table Bluff Lighthouse, is the Carson Mansion. Built by a local lumber mogul William Carson, it is now a private clubhouse for the Ingomar Club - so named after Carson's favorite play, *Ingomar the Barbarian*.



It's a beautiful building, but the giant wooden structure takes a lot of upkeep. These painters are probably busy year-round.

Across the street is the "Pink Lady", another Victorian/Queen Anne style house that Carson had built as a wedding gift for his son. It appears to now be a vacation rental. Probably a bit out of our range.



A bit further north on 101 is the little town of Trinidad. The GPS does as well as it can, but we are mostly left to guessing where the trail up Trinidad Head starts. We end up parked on this beach where a replica of Trinidad Head Light is set up. As it happens, this is as close as we get to anything like a lighthouse here.

It's a steep hike up the Head in search of the lighthouse, but the path is paved and switches back and forth some to ease the ascent. On the south/east side, we get an overlook of Trinidad Harbor and all the boats moored here. Further out, a bell buoy clangs faintly.





Trinidad Head is indeed an active lighthouse, owned and operated by the Coast Guard. Too bad they don't make it easier to visit or look at.

The instructions on the lighthouse friends website is to find the Spanish Cross, and the platform overlooking the lighthouse nearby. We do succeed in finding the cross (inscription dedicates it to King Charles of Spain in the 1700s; the only way it could be here is by the activities of the Spanish explorers). Then we find what must be the platform, a well-constructed affair with steps and a handrail, but there's nothing to see but shrubs and trees. I suspect that the lighthouse used to be visible from here before the vegetation grew up. Later, we learn that the only way to really see the lighthouse is by boat, and the sea on the north side of the Head is pretty rough.



When leaving, the GPS tries to get us back to the highway via someone's driveway. The owner was sitting out on his deck watching us try to get the van turned around. I wonder if he often sees tourists in his driveway brought there by their lying GPS gadgets. But Trinidad is too small to get lost in, and it isn't long before we get back to the highway. We are going to take a little break from lighthouses - the next objective is Redwood National Park.

Continuing northward on 101, before long we arrive at the town of Orick. Here is the first visitors' center, where Jerri can get her stamp. The ranger behind the desk is very helpful - and very solicitous for his young visitors. I get to witness a Junior Ranger Swearing-in; the last line of the oath is something like "and I promise to obey my mom", and everyone in the room cheers for the new Junior Ranger. Proceeding on, we reach the junction with the Newton B. Drury Scenic Parkway, which runs parallel with Highway 101 through the heart of the redwood forest.



The second visitors' center is at Prairie Creek. There is an elk herd here - and some silly tourists try to get as close to the wild animals as possible to take photos. I remember Yosemite orientation videos of the same sort of brave tourists getting chased by bison; fortunately, we don't see that re-enacted here.

Inside the visitors' center, I find a curious artifact: The interpretation is that an elk got his head stuck in a tree and died, and then the tree grew up and around the skull, embedding the skull and the roots

of the antlers in wood. Very strange, I wish I had taken a photo (Jerri didn't see it, and found it hard to believe).

A little ways further up the Scenic Parkway is the Cal-Barrel Road, off into the wilds of the forest. We decide to take the chance, and find it to be a two-way one-lane unpaved and unguarded road. Pretty scary. After maneuvering around a couple of cars coming back out, I decide we've gone far enough and get out of the lane at a wide place. We can get a closer look at the giant redwood trees here.





Something that is common about redwoods and sequoias is they often hollow-out at root level. We check out a dark little chamber underneath this huge tree.

A majestic redwood gets a big hug.



Fortunately, we don't encounter any more cars as we exit the Cal-Barrel road back to the Scenic Parkway. The Redwood National Forest guide map indicates a "Big Tree" location. We pull off the road into a parking lot moderately filled with cars and ridiculously giant RVs.



The Big Tree. We arrive at a time when the ranger is *not* giving a talk from this platform. Yes, it is a big tree, but I'm not sure it's really any bigger than some others we've seen.

Funny signpost in the Big Tree clearing. There is a circular hiking path around the Big Tree area, and we venture out a little, but we don't have time to spend a lot of time trekking around in the forest. Back on the road, we continue northward. Signs advise motorists to use their headlights in the gloomy forest. Eventually we get to the northern end of the Scenic Parkway and get back on the 101. Before long, we reach the Klamath River. I've heard of the Klamath, usually in connection with fishing, particularly salmon fishing. Apparently this is in an Indian reservation, for there is a casino here. Probably the food we could have gotten at the casino would have been better than the burgers we got at a bar. After lunch, we encounter a woman who points out what Klamath town was like in better days.





Just outside the national park at the north end is "Trees of Mystery", run by the Indians as a revenue source. We don't bother with the mystery tree tour, but avail ourselves of the restrooms and a closer look at the giant Paul Bunyan and Babe artwork statues.

Leaving the redwood forest behind, we proceed north on 101 to our next destination, Crescent City. Before we arrive, we drive past Crescent Beach and decide to take the time to stop and put our feet in the Pacific. The water is *cold*! Jerri is either smiling for the camera or grimacing at the touch of cold ocean water on her feeties.



Yes, that's cold water! Although the surf isn't active enough to attract surfers. Sure is beautiful, though, this wide sandy beach with the rolling breakers hugged on both sides by tree-covered hills.

There are two lighthouses in Crescent City, one near the town and one well outside. We figure the harder one to see with the given amount of time is the one further out, so we try for Point St. George first. We follow the prescribed route. At the end is a big house marked as the keepers' house, so that's a hopeful sign. We climb out to the water's edge and see nothing. I climb the hills to get a better look, and jog to and fro along the cliffs. I can see a bunch of rocks way out there but no lighthouse. We give up, and take an "official" photo of Jerri with the Point St. George sign.



We retrace our route out to get back to town, and then drive along the waterfront road. There are many places to pull off and we stop at a couple to try to see the Point St. George lighthouse. No dice. However, to the southeast, the smaller, closer-in lighthouse is clearly visible. We work our way over to that side of town, park in the lighthouse visitor parking lot, and walk over the sand and rocks of the causeway that is passable only at low tide over to Battery Point Island.



The lighthouse looks a lot like Point Loma in San Diego, a small two-story symmetrical house with the squat tower right in the middle.

There are a few people poking around in the late afternoon, but we mostly have the place to ourselves, so we can walk around to the back. Now, this is different than Point Loma. Extensions on the back and ground level for more room, and potted plants in the kitchen window, almost like someone lives here. The place is closed, of course, so we will have to come back tomorrow.



A view out to sea from Battery Point, at all the dangerous rocks.





Cute little bench with the silhouette of the lighthouse.

Looking back at the causeway we crossed to get here. There is a little trepidation of being out here with the threat that, if the tide comes in, we are stuck on the island, but the tide was at its ebb when we came out here less than a half hour ago, and the tide can't change that fast.



