

California September 2011



By Scooby Gill

Sunday 4th September 2011 - "Travel isn't about relaxing"

I had said that travel isn't about relaxing the day we had finally decided to bite the bullet and head for California for the second time in two years. The Virgin Atlantic website was being strange and it took several attempts to actually find out there were seats left on the dates we wanted and even then it indicated there were only 4 left on the outward leg. Then my credit card got refused because I very rarely use it and I was suddenly using it for a whole lump of money in one go. With a quick call to Coop to confirm I did actually intend to use the card for the tickets, we then returned to the Virgin website to be told there were no seats left. We persisted and the next time round it was all good again and finally, after a couple of glasses of fortifying wine, we had booked.

We really should have written a journal the first time as it had turned into quite an interesting occasion. Firstly, our trip to Alaska prior to continuing the holiday in California, had resulted in Phil badly hurting a rib whilst snowboarding, and prevented him from then surfing at all in California. Then the day before we were due to fly home, and had spent our budget, the Icelandic volcano kicked off and grounded us in California for an additional eleven days. It sounded great but at the time we really didn't know when we would be heading home or that Virgin Atlantic would reimburse us all our additional accommodation or food. So we were up for returning and, despite wondering whether this would be the last big trip for awhile due to looming work issues, we decided now was the time and no rib or volcano was going to spoil it this time. We were going to enjoy the sunshine, the great vegan food, the smiling friendly CA folk and Phil was going to have a chance to surf the Pacific waves for the first time.

So here we were finally on our way through torrential rain on the M25 to catch our flight from Heathrow. Upon arrival we had a quick underground ride to our correct terminal and then to check our bags in. Everything was all very straight forward and we soon found ourselves boarding. Our seats were a bit weird in that it was a row of three behind a row of four and so our video screens were kind of offset but we did have the row to ourselves and in fact the whole plane seemed pretty empty despite the initial indication upon booking the tickets that there were hardly any seats left. We could have moved after we were in the air but the window seats all looked taken and we liked the fact we had the row to ourselves. We both enjoyed some of the TV entertainment and the food was as expected really; not really inspiring but edible and with the usual omission to provide any additional snacks that everybody else seemed to be getting who weren't vegan. Phil didn't manage to get any sleep and I got very little and we both had stages where we both struggled to get comfortable but 10 hours or so later, we were touching down.

We had in fact arrived a bit ahead of schedule. We had meant to arrive at 7.05pm but got in at 6.30pm. We were wondering whether we would be able to pick up the hire car early. However, upon reaching the immigration check point we realised that we could be picking it up late. The queues were massive and very slow and it seemed that every few minutes another boarder guard would pick up their things and leave, not to be replaced, whilst the queues got longer and longer. At last at the front and with fingerprints and photos taken we were through and straight to pick up our bags, which I'm sure must have been round and round the carousel many times in the meantime. Then to our horror, we discovered another huge queue to get through customs. This one was a little quicker thankfully and after declaring that we had food but only in the form of snacks (no fruit, dairy, meat or fish), we were waved through and finally outside at 7.50pm to the familiar busy road that circles around the airport. A few minutes later a Hertz shuttle arrived and we boarded for the short ride to the car hire branch.

Upon arrival at Hertz we encountered, yes you guessed it, another queue. By now we were pretty tired as it was the equivalent of about 5.30am in the UK and we had had no sleep overnight. Once at the front of the queue we were attended to by a guy called Gladwyn who was quite a character. He got us a slightly bigger car for the same price but did accidentally try and charge us some of the tax twice. We got our own back though when we got really confused about the price of adding Phil as an additional driver. We thought the additional cost was a bit steep and argued the point before all of us, including Gladwyn, realised we were thinking about the amount in pounds not dollars. We were tired though so it was no wonder we were confused. Once that was sorted, we were on our way into the vast parking lot to find our car in its numbered position. A quick pack into the car and general check and once past the guarded gate, to make sure nobody was taking the wrong vehicle we were out on to the now dark streets of LA.

We had thought about what and where we were going on this first night in advance. We had booked into a motel in Encinitas, in southern California, for the first three nights and this was where we were now heading. We knew we wouldn't get there until really late so we had planned to go via the Wholefoods Market near the airport that we knew to pick up some

food so as I drove, Phil navigated us there quite easily. We were actually quite proud of ourselves for knowing where we were and where we had to go whilst I immediately got back into the swing of driving an automatic on the wrong side of the road on the wrong side of the car. We did a quick dash into Wholefoods, with blinkered eyes as we knew we didn't have the time or the energy to look at all the goodies inside, and then we were back on Highway One south. We had chosen this route merely because it was simple but in hindsight it might have been better to have made the effort to pick up the Freeway early on. We seemed to get caught at loads of traffic lights and to make matters worse, it was now raining and the traffic had really slowed down, almost as if they weren't used to driving in rain! It was a slow journey to the junction with Freeway 5 and by the time we reached it I was really struggling with tiredness, but not as much as Phil was. He was doing his best to co-pilot but was drifting off every now and then. I was listening to music, eating mints and generally jabbering away to myself to keep awake.

Finally at around 11.50pm we arrived at Econolodge in Encinitas. It was an amazing feeling pulling in to the easily found parking lot knowing that we had made it down here safely and could now sleep. There was nobody at reception but it said to ring the bell which I did so, whilst Phil unpacked the rest of our stuff from the car. There was no response so I rang it again, and then again. Still no response and so I decided to call the telephone number it said to call if you needed anything. To our horror, this just rang the telephone in reception and resulted in a recorded message. We were contemplating the sofas in the reception area when Phil just held his finger on the reception bell and suddenly we heard movement from upstairs and shortly after a rather tired looking Indian guy came through the door. He was greeted with a 'thank god' from us after our ten minute attempt to get anyone to respond and he initially seemed grumpy but then he apologised and explained that he had bad ears and had drops in them that made it difficult to hear.

With the key to our room secured and it was only just around the corner from reception, we eagerly settled in. I attempted to eat my food but was really too tired so shortly after arriving we both crashed into a very sound sleep.

Monday 5th September 2011 (Labor Day) – “Looks Stormy”

There had been rain and thunder in the night and it had been warm. We had both slept well but, to our surprise, awoke at 6.30am and felt pretty okay. We had both expected that it would take us a couple of days to adjust but apparently not, or so we thought. We laid around for a while and then got up and showered, although I had to go out and asked the guy on reception, called Gavin, how to work the shower as it didn't seem to want to turn on and to grab some bigger towels, that were absent from the room. He was very chirpy now and asked if we had slept well. After showers, and working out how to use it, we sorted out our bags post flight getting stuff that we could keep in the car separated from the rest. We investigated the breakfast that was provided by the hotel and found that we could eat the bagels and bananas and there was even some non-dairy creamer available so we were able to have a cup of tea. There was a guy in reception chatting to the owner whilst we were getting breakfast and he was saying about having done some yoga that morning and about the recent big waves for surfing. Phil was going to go back out to chat to him but he was gone a few minutes later.

After breakfast, Phil had discovered that REI, an outdoor chain shop that had a branch nearby, was having a Labor Day sale; we thought we would start with that today. On the way, we went to look over the nearby beach and to check out the surf. There were loads of people out and it wasn't brilliant but okay. The weather was nice and warm but it kind of looked stormy, like it could rain at any moment.

At REI Phil found some trousers. I looked for trousers but didn't see any but did find a nice North Face fleece in the sale. I also tried on some shoes which were a bargain price but in the end I didn't like the fit. After REI we stopped off at the Surfy Surfy shop for Phil to look at the boards. He got chatting to the lady in there called Summer and told her what he was looking for. She checked with the factory to find out that they didn't have anything either so that saved us a trip out there, although I was disappointed not to be seeing Moon Kitty, the resident cat at the Surfy Surfy factory that I had met last time. Summer did mention about a board that another guy that works there had that Phil might be able to try out but the guy wasn't going to be in work until tomorrow so we would pop in then. Basically before Phil could get surfing he had to find a board. He came over only with a shorty wetsuit with the intention of buying a board and also a full wetsuit before heading to the colder waters up north. The shorty would be okay just about down here for now.

After Surfy Surfy we went back to the room, which was on the way, to use the loo and to drop off our stuff before heading towards Cardiff by the Sea to the Patagonia store there. Again I tried on some trousers but they were no good and Phil checked out the boards. We both left empty handed which is unusual for us in a Patagonia store. With that we headed on

southwards to Solanas Beach where there was Mitch's surf shop but unfortunately it was closed for Labor Day. We headed back north and swung by the Wholefood Market in Encinitas for some lunch supplies, this time a meatless meatloaf sandwich and our first iced chai tea latte of the trip. Continuing north we looked in at a surf shop in Encinitas but Phil could find nothing of interest board wise here either. Outside in the parking lot there was a strange plant which had long beans on it that we had never seen before.



We continued up the coast on Highway One to San Clemente. We had to do a section of the journey on Freeway 5 which was really busy at one point with traffic occasionally at a standstill for a while. We reached San Clemente though in enough time for the surf shop Icons of Surf to still be open and Phil had a good look at the boards. There was one in particular that he was quite keen on but still wasn't sure. I meanwhile took a fancy to a T-shirt they had on sale so bought that. We left with Phil keeping this particular board in mind.



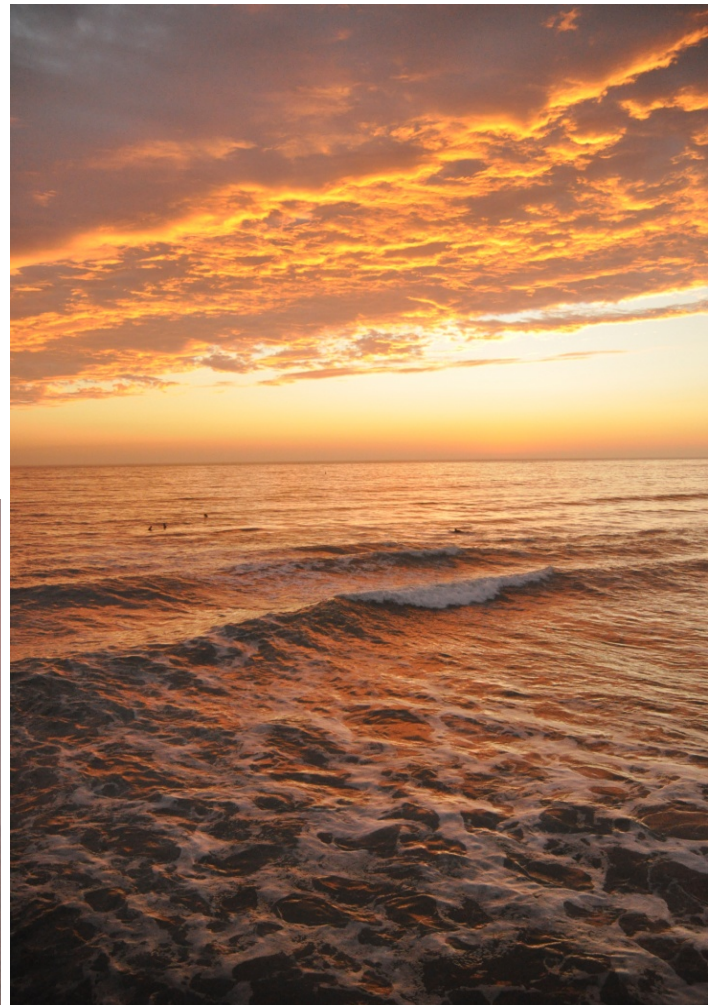
We headed to the beach car park to eat our now quite late lunch and then we took a walk along the front towards the boardwalk. There were surfers around the pier catching waves and the light was really quite amazing. There was even a rainbow in the distant stormy looking clouds, which had seemingly been following us around all day. I took some photos under the pier and around before we took a slow walk back. I had unfortunately learnt the errors of walking long distances with my flip flops on which were quite hard around the straps and now sported little blisters around that area.

We took the Highway all the way back to Encinitas. Along the freeway, a cop car was swerving backwards and forth in



front of all the lanes of traffic. We weren't quite sure whether he was trying to stop us all or not but thankfully we were a few cars back so just went along with what the rest of the traffic was doing, which was slowly following the cop car. After a while he pulled off the road and blocked the slip way and the traffic on the freeway just continued but found that a little further up there had been an accident and that is probably what the cop was slowing the traffic for. Strange way of doing it though!

We stopped by the Encinitas Wholefoods for water supplies, a drink and some raw cheesecake for pudding, as well as had a quick look around. At around 9.30pm we headed back to the motel for showers, a relax and a journal catch up before sleep.





Tuesday 6th September 2011 – “It’ll get you in the end”

It seems we hadn't beaten the time difference after all. It was a bad night's sleep for both of us with Phil getting hardly any at all. We blearily had our breakfast of bagels and bananas before heading out into the heat outside and off to Surfy Surfy again to pick up the yellow 6'8" e-wing Egg demo board from JP. We headed to a spot called 'Beacons' which Summer had recommended and Phil donned his shorty wetsuit he had brought with him hoping it was going to be warm enough as there had been talk that the water was cold now. It was shoulder high and mushy and he struggled to catch anything at first, whilst lots of long boarders around him easily caught waves. However, after about 30 minutes and sitting further inside, he got into the swing of it and I was taking photos of every wave. Phil chatted to a few of the guys out there and they were friendly.



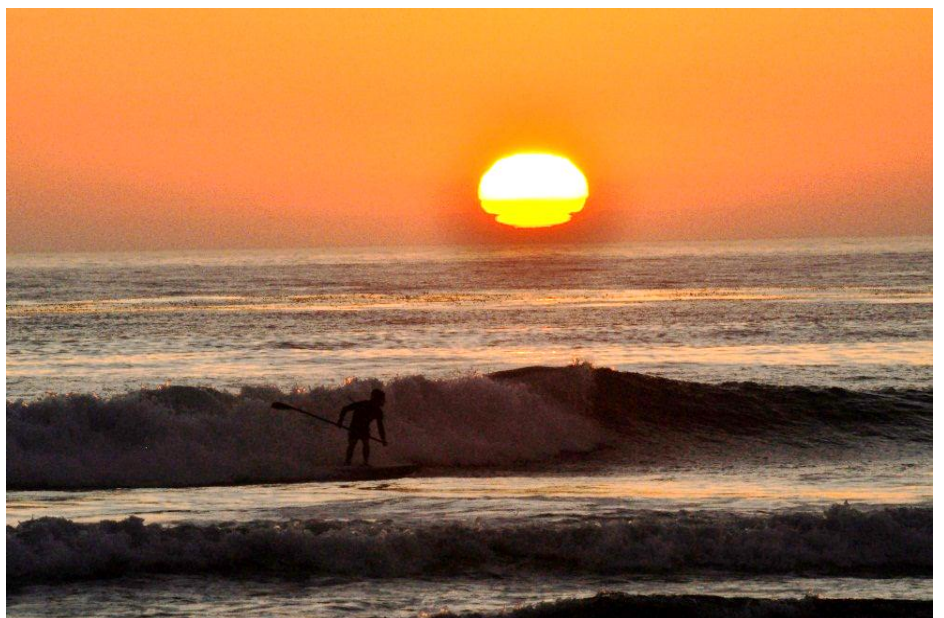
We took the board back and Phil said he would think about the similar 6'8" blue/grey one that was for sale. Then we went to Wholefoods to pick up some lunch. This time we went for vegan pizza (hummus and olive) and salads which we ate outside in the shade and relative cool of the Wholefoods patio area. Bellies more than full, we returned to a now open Mitch's surf shop in Solanas Beach. Phil spent some time looking at boards here but was shocked about how poorly finished the 'top dollar' boards were. Again he left empty handed with the search for *the* board continuing elsewhere.

We continued south to San Diego to check out a couple of surf shops. Firstly it was Surf Indian and there were nice 'logs' there but nothing in Phil's size so we continued to Pacific Beach surf shop but there really wasn't much there. With known surf shops exhausted, we stopped off for a nice fruit smoothie before we headed for Point Loma which is meant to have good views all around and across to Mexico. Unfortunately it is a military area and it is closed off at 5pm to the public so we couldn't get all the way to the end and the views we did see were predominately military bases so not great from that point of view. We did stop off at some war graves which sounds a bit grim but the very fact that there was so many all the same size and colour in lines and lines, was quite fascinating, as well as shocking in some ways. They were just lines and lines and fields and fields of them along the route.



From this point, and seeing as we were in San Diego, we decided to phone Phil's friend Lee who lives here to see if he wanted to meet up. We had had a vague arrangement with him but it seems, once ringing him, it became even more vague as he had only just finished work and was tired and we were both pretty wiped out so we all decided to get together tomorrow evening instead. With that we drove back up north and sat overlooking Cardiff beach to catch the sunset but it was now kind of chilly after the heat of the day. Phil thought he might have seen Joel Tudor, a well known surfer, in the parking lot but wasn't 100% sure.

Now traditionally it seems, on the way back through Encinitas to our motel, we stopped off for food at Wholefoods. Phil went for some salads and curry from the hot food and salad bar whilst I sent for a vegan cheesy ravioli thing from the freezer section that I could heat in the microwave in the room. We planned on a relaxing evening in but on return, and when going to use the netbook via the mains, discovered that I had brought the wrong power adaptor. I had brought the one for Portugal which clearly wasn't going to work for us over here. Doh! We then went into a panic about what we would do if we couldn't charge anything. There would be no netbook to check the surf on, or book rooms for the following days or check emails and I



wouldn't be able to charge my camera batteries. It is a little disturbing how panicky we got about this and really highlighted our reliance it seems on technology. Once we had calmed down a bit, we started thinking about whether and where we could get one with visions of trying to arrange an Amazon order to be sent to our next location and how best to use the remaining 10% of power on the netbook to sort all this out. Then we thought of REI and did a quick search to discover that they did something that might work but the nearest store that did it was down near San Diego as the nearby Encinitas one didn't have them in stock. We could do nothing more this evening so resolved to go to that store first thing in the morning. With that we had showers and Phil rinsed his shorty wetsuit and we turned in to sleep at around 9.30pm. Originally we had intended to go and see the Mattson2 playing down near San Diego this evening. We had missed them the last time due to bad timing and it seems it was to be the same this time as we discovered that instead of every Tuesday evening, they only played the third Tuesday of the month. Perhaps it was for the best as we were both in need of an early night anyway.

Wednesday 7th September 2011

We both had a better night's sleep with Phil grabbing five plus hours and more for me. We woke up quite early though, eager to get the stress of finding a power adaptor over with. So we grabbed our usual quick bagels and bananas breakfast. We also booked in to this particular motel for another night as we were meeting Lee tonight and fancied hanging around a bit more in the warmth anyway. Then we headed south towards San Diego and easily found the REI only after a bit of a diversion. We were straight over to the travel adaptor area and found what we were looking for. Now we could relax and we took a few minutes to have a good look around this particular branch. I found some trousers in the sale section that looked okay and when I tried them on, much to my delight, they were a really good fit. Unfortunately the poppers were broken on them and I figured that is why there were in the sale section but I couldn't find the sale price. When I asked one of the shop assistants she said they were on the wrong rail and shouldn't have been in the sale and promptly took them from me when I told her that I thought they might have been as the poppers were broken. She pointed me in the direction of the rest of these particular styles of trousers but to my dismay they didn't have my size. I was gutted as it is really hard for me to find good fitting trousers. Phil however pointed out that they were REI's own brand so the chances are I would be able to find them in another branch. When we went to pay for the travel adaptor, the shop assistant was the usual REI chatty happy person who asked us loads of questions about where we were from and where we were planning on going. We mentioned we were heading for Joshua Tree tomorrow and she then looked really concerned and told us we should be really careful. Apparently a few days previous a Dutch couple had gone hiking in Joshua Tree National Park and seven hours later they had been found dead. She indicated it was really hot and they had been unprepared but still, it was a bit disturbing to hear. She was either extremely concerned or REI staff liked to have a bit of a dramatic story to tell unwitting tourists. We think it was probably the former! We left and returned to Encinitas and our room to get the netbook on charge and completely feel satisfied that we were 'out of the woods' with our techno reliability panic. We kicked back for a bit and then, full of the promise of finding trousers that fitted, we returned to the Encinitas REI and sure enough they had them in my size. I bought two pairs in different colours.

On the way back again to our room, we stopped off at the nearby Lou's record store to take a look. A couple of days back we had noticed that they had an announcement up about Shawn Lee's new album launch/availability. Phil decided to grab a copy and have a look around. We then discovered that in fact Shawn Lee had actually played at the store last night to launch the new album. We couldn't believe it was yet another missed music/entertainment opportunity and it made it even worse in the fact that the record store is right next door to our hotel!

After we returned to our room and had a bit of a pack up in anticipation of moving on tomorrow. Phil also rang up his friend Lee to firm up the arrangements for meeting up later. We then decided to head in the direction of San Diego but along the coast and to look for a couple of caches on the way. Unfortunately, it seemed that the GPS was taking us in a direction that didn't make sense and after driving around and around in circles for a while we decided to just head to the seafront instead and just chill out for a while watching the surfers out to sea and watching the coastal trains noisily run back and forth behind us.

After a while we thought it best to start off into San Diego. We had arranged and had directions to meet up Lee's wife in their clothing shop. After a short search and then finding a parking space, we arrived at the shop; a kind of retro clothing, record and art shop and introduced ourselves to his wife and a friend. We had a short wait whilst waiting for Lee's daughter to arrive before we then headed off for their house; us following behind in our car. We criss crossed numerous back streets and main roads to get there and about one street away from our destination had quite a large road to cross over. Lee's wife got across first and waited on the other side whilst we waited for a gap. Suddenly a car coming from the left and just in front of us started to brake suddenly and then promptly slammed straight into a palm tree just past our junction. The force of the hit caused the tree to completely topple over and the car to rebound back. What incensed the driver to do this, with a completely



clear road in front and behind on their side, was beyond us but, with people already rushing to their aid, we decided to get the hell out of there in case we, being the nearest car were suddenly drawn into any cause of the crash. Once over the other side of the road we continued following Lee's wife just around the corner and parked up outside their house. There was great discussion about what had just happened and they said when they heard the bang they had been really concerned it was us. None of us could work out why the car would have done this and it almost seemed like a bit of a dream that hadn't just actually happened. With all that had happened and was now being discussed it was a bit of a weird introduction and hello to Phil's mate Lee.

We followed them into their house where we were greeted by a pack of dogs, one big old Heinz 57, a Chihuahua cross and two pampered Chihuahua pure breeds that belonged to a friend of Lee and his wife who was staying at their house. As we sat chatting for a while, I also amused myself with petting the dogs. I had never actually seen a Chihuahua for real and always thought they were strange little creatures but they were actually really quite cute and so so tiny, it was weird. I couldn't resist taking a photo of Phil with one of them purely because the combination of tall man

and tiny dog is amusing. In California it seemed it was the norm for big macho guys to have Chihuahuas, often riding along with them in huge pick-up trucks. This is in complete contrast to the norm in the UK for macho guys to have Pit Bulls, Doberman dogs or other huge fierce looking dogs. I think the guys over in CA have a more intelligent approach to this in terms of the fact that these little dogs really act as babe magnets. Most women go all smoochey over little dogs so perfect for a conversation opener for the single man!

Lee and Phil chatted about old skateboarding times, how Lee came to San Diego and what he was doing now, whilst Lee enjoyed a smoke and seemed surprised that we both declined. All the other ladies in the house were getting ready to go out.

After a while we left to walk down the road to a local bar that they knew did good pizza, including vegan versions. On the way and just along the street from them we stopped at a corner so they could show us a house where the guy actually feeds skunks on his porch. The ladies held back a bit, which slightly bothered me, but still we both went and took a peek and there, on the porch eating from a bowl was one skunk. It didn't really take any notice of us but carried on with its nightly feed. Apparently the guy that owns the house loves them and so feeds them every night but the neighbours, possibly quite understandably, were not best pleased about it. I had come face to face with a skunk a few years ago but Phil had never seen one before and I was delighted to see one again as long as it wasn't going to spray me. Skunk staring over with, we continued along to the main street and the street that the earlier crash had taken place on. The car had been removed and all that remained was the tumbled tree lying on the sidewalk. We went over to do a full analysis. It looked like the car had hit the high kerb just past the junction we were on and this had launched it into the air and into the tree. The palm tree was really quite solid so it was a relief and a surprise that we had seen the driver immediately after move quite normally in the car so they had not seriously hurt themselves. We all drew the conclusion, whilst sat on the fallen tree, that the driver must have been intoxicated in some way to have hit one of the only trees on this wide and practically empty road. With full analysis over with we continued to the bar.

The bar was really quite busy but we managed to find a table next to the window to accommodate all of us. We ordered pizza and Phil investigated the beer on offer. I stuck to a soft drink as I was going to drive later. Phil enquired about the vegan options and the bar staff very helpfully went to do a quick bit of research on-line, returning a couple of minutes later with a vegan suggestion of one of the ales (Alesmith) so Phil promptly ordered a pint of this. It was really nice ale and I had a little sip to confirm Phil's opinion on this. The pizza was also really good



and we soon polished it off between the two of us whilst we continued to chat away. Lee had some unusual ideas and opinions about life in general; some of which we got and others that we didn't have a clue about. The smoke he had had earlier might have got him going in his enthusiasm to explain some unusual concepts and it was quite interesting to listen to but being that we didn't partake in such stimulations, a little less easy for us to fully grasp.

After filling our bellies and a pleasant evening in the bar, we headed back to their house and out into the relative cool of their backyard where they had an undercover 'lounge' area. The dogs continued to fascinate me and Lee continued to smoke. After a while we decided we should really head back to Encinitas as we were planning our big drive to the desert tomorrow and so needed to get some good sleep. So with goodbyes said and directions back to the highway, we headed back up north.

It had been good for Phil to see his mate from years ago and to get an insight into his new life in San Diego. As much as we enjoyed the relative warmth of San Diego we were however, pleased to be heading back to quieter areas. On reaching 'home' we completed a quick pack up as much as possible before retiring to bed in anticipation of tomorrow's excitement.

Thursday 8th September 2011 - "Hot stuff"

We woke up early this morning and got going after a quick breakfast of the usual bagels and bananas from the hotel. We had a lot of miles to do today and didn't want to hang around. With a quick stop at the Wholefoods in Encinitas to stock up with lunch stuff (we discovered they did scrambled tofu at that time of the morning), we headed north on Highway 5 before turning onto the state highway towards the mining town of Julian.



As we ventured further inland, the temperature got hotter and hotter and at 90 degrees we resorted to the air conditioning. Not far inland we were soon onto quiet roads and countryside. There were loads of flocks of turkey vultures cruising the air above the increasing mountainous terrain and cacti clung to the steep sides as we wound our way up 'wiggly' roads. On these steep roads you would get 'turn outs' which are areas where you can pull over to allow faster traffic to pass. We however, had a giggle every time we saw one due to the obvious (to us) reason that 'turn out' had toilet references in the UK, particularly to my dad whom would ask me at times, when I presented him with a vegan meal 'would it turn me out Scoobs?'. Childish of us I know!

You could sense that you were moving towards more areas of wilderness and Phil made a comment about how my dad wouldn't like it here as there were no BP garages (my dad likes to use only BP garages for fuelling). In fact there was only the occasional house here and there, let alone any garages. Luckily we had totally fuelled up before we left but unfortunately it was not a BP garage! Getting fuel here is different to how it works in the UK. Here you have to pay up front, either on card or with cash, before you fuel. This makes it a little tricky if you don't know how much you can fit in but if you overpay you just go and get the difference back on your card or in cash. We very quickly got to know how much we could fit in and how much it cost though so it wasn't too much of a problem. The biggest thing to pleasantly get used to is just how much cheaper the fuel is over here!

At 3000ft it was 92 degrees which is confusing for us because we normally associate high elevations with cold rather than heat. An hour or so into our journey we arrived in Julian, a small mining town that sits at 4000ft. We nabbed a parking spot in the shade and took our 'brunch' that we had got earlier and found a tree shaded picnic area for a leisurely break. It was a lovely quiet spot from which we could watch the world go by – although there was only the occasional car passing anyway. After our brunch we had a wander around the town. As the town was called Julian, pretty much all of the shops, businesses and groups had that as a prefix in the name and this caused me great amusement as I have a friend called Julian who is equally amused by the simple things in life. Therefore it had to be done; I had to capture as many of these names photographically in order to make him up a special Julian card. My favourite moment was discovering a shop that sold dried

WELCOME TO JULIAN

JULIAN
WEED WHACKING
CELL '619-415-9366 STANLEY

JULIAN TEA COTTAGE

JULIAN IMAGES GALLERY
FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY

JULIAN CAFE & BAKERY
BUILT IN 1882 BURNED IN 1957 RESTORED IN 1978

JULIAN WOMAN'S CLUB

JULIAN PIE COMPANY

JULIAN NUT HOUSE

JULIAN REALTY
EST. 1946

JULIAN CANDY BASKET CANDY
& JULIAN'S BEST FUDGE
PLEASE COME UPSTAIRS

JULIAN COLLECTIBLES & GIFTS

JULIAN MARKET & DELI

PIONEER MUSEUM
VISIT JULIAN'S PAST

JULIAN DRUG STORE



Desert Chapel
God's Thrift Store
 {You Pay What God Tells You To Pay}
 Donations Only For Products
 718 SHOOTW-IRON TRAIL
 (SHELTER VALLEY)
 Come by to look around or just
 to visit!
 All Proceeds go to
 Promote the Ministries



I'M LOOKING FOR..

A PLACE AND A NICHE IN THIS BEAUTIFUL
 ARTISTIC COMMUNITY IN WHICH TO PURSUE
 MY MUSIC AND TO FIND SOLITUDE AND PEACE
 I LOVE ISOLATION AND TO BE SURROUNDED
 BY FOREST VISTAS...THE CITY AIN'T FOR ME!
 SELF SUFFICIENT TRAVELER 1960'S ERA...
 DON'T SMOKE, DON'T CHEW AND NO BREW TOO
 JUST NEED SOME SPACE TO PARK MY VAN
 GOT A BAD BACK SO I AIN'T MUCH HELP
 CAN'T PAY NO MONEY BUT SORTA' FUNNY
 IF YOU CAN HELP AND YOU READ THIS PAPER
 I'LL PARK OUT THERE AND BE A NEIGHBOR
 SIXTY YEARS OLD, 59 IF YOU'RE COUNTIN'
 GOOD WATER IS THE YOUTH OF MY FOUNTAIN

BURMASHAVE! (HARDLY ANY OF THIS SH - RHYMES!)
 KEVIN 760-468-4209

of the car, on the wrong side of the road and to drive an automatic (more difficult for him to keep his long left leg away from the nonexistent clutch) but on now quieter roads so all of that seemed sensible.

From Julian the ground drops away a far amount but the temperature continues to increase. We were now getting into the real desert area so no more trees, only weird prickly vegetation. I wondered whether we would see any tumbleweeds as I had seen them once before in the desert. I told Phil that they were actually living plants despite the fact that they roll around freely. He wasn't sure about that so we said we would check on the net at some point. It turns out I wasn't completely right about that after all!

The tumbleweed is often thought of as the symbol of the American West. Actually, it isn't native to North America at all, but was brought to this country (unintentionally) by Ukrainian farmers. The tumbleweed really is a weed, and its real name is the Russian thistle. Tumbleweeds aren't considered as having any redeeming value except for the fact that they are interesting to watch as they tumble about. There are actually people (not many) who harvest tumbleweeds and sell them, and the people that buy them apparently fashion interesting crafts and decorative items from tumbleweeds. As a matter of fact, the City of Chandler, Arizona constructs their official Christmas tree every year from tumbleweeds! Tumbleweeds grow on dry plains, in fields, and on roadsides, generally in grain-growing areas. Most people wouldn't recognize a Russian thistle plant growing off the main road, but it is a round, bushy, plant that grows to about 3 feet. At maturity it breaks off at the base and because it is rounded, it tumbles in the wind. There is a natural purpose to this tumbling--the tumbleweed can produce up to 250,000 seeds, and the tumbling serves to spread those seed wherever it tumbles, guaranteeing that there will be more tumbleweeds in the future.

The road turned into a dusty, straight road with only the occasional car passing in the other direction. We were suddenly on the set of one of the many films we had seen. This was the Anza-Borrego desert and State Park. To add to the unreality, the temperature just got hotter and hotter and we were thankful for the efficient air conditioning and just hoped that our electrical equipment within the car, including the net book, wouldn't fry. Despite the heat, we could resist stopping just to see what it



was like outside the car. The first time was when the temperature was 109F and that felt pretty damn hot. Beyond that it was just so quiet outside. Phil said that it was so quiet his ears hurt and it was so dry and hot that his eyeballs hurt too! We stood there in silence just looking around us and listening to nothing before the heat just got a bit too much and we ran back to the comfort and the relative cool of the car and continued up the long, straight, dry road. When the temperature got up to 118F we decided we just had to get out again just to see what that felt like. It was hot, damn hot, but amazing. We wondered how anything could survive or live happily out here but we had seen camping areas with RV's

parked up in them. A little further up the road we reached the hottest temperature of the day at 119F but seeing as it was only 1 degree hotter than when we had got out, we kept on going. A little further up the road we started to smell a funny smell and couldn't quite put our finger on it. It smelt slightly chemical but with the absence of any kind of industry around here, we started to get paranoid about the car having something wrong with it. Breaking down in the middle of this desert wouldn't be much fun so it kind of played on our minds a bit. The smell seemed to get stronger the further we went and it also started to smell quite sulphurous. After a while we started to see the first glimmers of the Salton Sea, a huge manmade lake in the middle of the desert. Then it dawned on us that it was the actual Salton Sea that had been creating the sulphurous smell!!! We took one of the side roads to take a closer look and this indeed confirmed the origin of the smell was indeed the 'sea'. It was really pungent and looked very uninviting but despite this pelicans drifted on and off its surface. Later research revealed a little more information about the sea.

The Salton Sea is an incongruous salty lake the size of Dartmoor in the middle of the Californian desert. It has become one of the world's most important bird feeding and breeding grounds, used by hundreds of species migrating between the Arctic and South America. Today though, the lake's very existence is in grave danger, as the water that feeds it is drying up, threatening to leave an almost lifeless salt sump surrounded by a vast toxic dust bowl. Such an event would be a global environmental and public health catastrophe.

The Salton Sea shouldn't exist. A century ago engineers trying to build a canal for the Colorado River underestimated the power of the water behind temporary gates; it broke through and for two years flooded the Salton Trough, a valley on the San Andreas Fault. It was not the first time that the valley had filled with water; for centuries the Colorado periodically flowed this way to the Pacific, before changing course again. This time, though, there was no outlet to the ocean and the sea remained.

At its biggest, the Salton Sea was 45 miles long and 17 miles wide. As the water level has dropped by 30 feet, so it has shrunk to 35 by 15 miles. For decades the sea has been in equilibrium as water lost through evaporation has been replaced by rain and run-off from farms, via 1,500 miles of irrigation drains and the New, Alamo and Whitewater Rivers.

The wide expanse of shallow sea, often only inches deep, and never more than 50 feet, offers rich pickings in mud teeming with plankton and other invertebrates and, at its peak, supports more than 200 million fish. More than 400 bird species live at the sea or visit each year, two-thirds of all birds recorded in the US. They include nearly all the North American population of eared grebes and American white pelicans, and dozens more species that are threatened or endangered. Abundant herons, egrets, and wood storks live alongside ducks of all types - mallards, pintails, ruddies, and cinnamon teal. As almost every inch of California's wetlands has been taken over by developers and farmers, the Salton Sea has become essential to the birds' survival. 'For many species, sustaining the sea is a matter of life or death,' claims a report by the Redlands Institute research centre.

It is not just birds that have prospered here. This desert is one of the driest places on earth, with only two inches of rain a year. But by drawing water from the Colorado and warmed in winter by relatively higher sea temperatures, the surrounding Imperial County has become one of the most productive farming areas in the world and America's chief supplier of winter vegetables, melons and date palms. 'The first water melons, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, all come up at the time when they are not available from other parts of the US,' says Al Kalin, who with his brother Carson farms 2,000 acres at the southern end of the sea. Farming is the lifeline of the county, where two out of 10 adults are unemployed and nearly half the children live in poverty. Half a million acres are under cultivation, supporting at least half of all the jobs, generating up to \$3bn (£1.7bn) a year.

Farming is also the greatest threat to the Salton Sea. A century of fertilizer and pesticide-rich water pouring in off fields has created a salty chemical stew in which algal blooms thrive and strangle other life. In the Fifties and Sixties the sea attracted more visitors than Yosemite National Park, to sail, swim, fish and bird watch. But mass fish and bird deaths and the sulphurous stench of oxygen-starved water drove most tourists away. Along the shore they have left derelict homes, hotels and diners. Since then, the sea's problems have built up. Every year, several million tonnes of salt is added to the water, which is now saltier than the Pacific. Nitrates, phosphates and magnesium, have accumulated to dangerous levels, feeding the proliferating algae. Starved of oxygen, three of the four main fish species appear to have disappeared. The only native fish, the desert pupfish, whose eggs can survive years waiting for the waters to come, is critically endangered. Campaigners now fear unless something is done they could suffer the fate of the Aral Sea in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, where dust clouds can be seen on satellite pictures. However, it is little surprise that some people are questioning the worth of spending billions of dollars preserving something that was an artificial creation in the first place. But most agree it should be preserved because it provides benefits for wildlife that nowhere else in the world provides.



A few photographs later whilst holding my breath against the stench, we left the shoreline and continued north. We past fields and fields of vineyards, date palms and peaches which seemed a little surreal given the desert environment and even more bizarre that their very existence was due to the Salton Sea and the Salton Sea's impending possible demise is now due to the farming. On reaching the junction of the 10 East we decided to stop and refuel and grab some cool drinks before we headed into Joshua Tree National Park. We knew there was no chance of refueling until we got out of the park and didn't want to have to bother with trying to find fuel after our long drive later. Fully refueled and refreshed we headed east to the park entrance along the uphill 10 East. There were signs along the side of the road warning drivers to turn off their

AC to prevent overheating on the long uphill. We figured this was directed at the really large trucks that were slowly crawling up the hill but turn ours off briefly just in case until we could stand it no more and then turned it on again. Not long up this road however, we found the turning to the park entrance. It was up a quite a small road up to the entrance and to our surprise, we seemed to be the only people on it. We had expected quite a grand entrance to the park not just a little wall with a sign on it. It was around this entrance that the GPS was indicating vaguely to location of a cache we had got the details of. We searched in this area and, reading the clue, it just didn't make any sense so eventually we left eager to not waste any more time and to get into the park.



A few miles along the small road, and after only passing a couple of cars going in the opposite direction, we finally came to the actual park headquarters and pulled in to use the toilet and also pay our park fee. I also took the opportunity to buy some postcards. We were given a map of the park and the park ticket was stapled to it. We had to keep this ticket safe as at the other end of the park, we would have to present it to prove we had paid. With all the formalities over with, we headed into the park with Phil still at the wheel.

The road was much smaller than we had anticipated with the edges encroached my sandy banks here and there. It was still really quite hot outside but after the severe heat of the desert earlier, it almost felt a

little chilly! We stopped for the first time with a view overlooking the Pinto Basin, a vast expanse of wild land that extended so far it was difficult to get a grip of scale. We ventured slightly off the road and into amongst the cacti here but I was a little freaked out by the numerous small holes in the sand surrounding me. They were probably some kind of rodent burrows but I also knew that this was also tarantula territory. Phil teased me to stick my hand down to see what was down them but I declined the challenge.

We continued to stop along the route here and there for photos and reading the information points at the various points of interest along the way. I had read about what wildlife you could see in this area prior to our trip and I really wanted to see a coyote or even a tarantula, from a distance. Unfortunately we saw neither. The latter was less disappointing! Midway through the park and not long after a brief stop at the 'cacti garden' we had decided to take the road north west towards Joshua Tree town entrance.

This was meant to be the more scenic route and took us past many amazing rock formations. Our stops, as a result became more and more frequent for photos and also investigating the climbing options amongst the rocks. We weren't going to be climbing ourselves (we had neither the insurance to cover us, the equipment or the time this trip) but it was interesting to look regardless.





With the light starting to fade we stepped up the pace a little bit and headed for the north west entrance at Joshua Tree and at 6.45pm we reached the exit/entrance. There was a park booth there but nobody to check our ticket after all so we drove on out of the national park unhindered. At this point I had the details of another cache we could quickly look for but again, the GPS seemed to be taking us way off what the hint was indicating and so we decided again to leave this and continue to head towards our night destination of Palm Springs. As we drove I discovered that the GPS had actually reset itself somehow and on both occasions whilst searching for the caches, the coordinates were now different to the ones that I had originally and correctly entered into it. That then explained the crazy locations we were searching in but by now, it was too late to correct this. It was a bit disappointing to not have done a couple of caches around here but no big deal in the scheme of things as we had seen some amazing scenery in the meantime anyway. We had both really liked Joshua Tree National Park. It was quite unlike any environment we had visited before and I think we both felt that one day we would return. It was interesting however that we had both thought that it would be bigger than it was. It had only taken us so long to drive through it because we had stopped so many times – you could drive through in about an hour otherwise.

Now we headed west again towards Palm Springs and it was now that we discovered how high we had been in Joshua Tree as we just seemed to be dropping and dropping forever. As we reached the bottom of the valley and we could see a vast expanse of flat land in front of us with acres and acres and acres of wind turbines. They must have extended for miles. As the wind turbines started to fizzle out, signs of more concentrated buildings increased and we knew we were getting near to Palm Springs. With Phil still driving but now tiring after the long, full and hot drive, we were both relieved. Our relief was unfounded though as, once off the highway and following the directions to our prebooked hotel, the long straight road went on and on and on, and did I say on! It was unbelievable. After what seemed like a comically frustrating amount of driving and one wrong turn we finally reached our hotel.



The guy on the desk was quite an unusual character. He managed to be totally laid back at the same time as resembling a character out of the Adams Family. A quick check in got us to our room and the air conditioning was duly switched on. It was quite noisy but necessary. As it was by now past 8pm, we got straight on to locating a vegan restaurant called Native Foods that I had had my eyes on before we had even left the UK. There are a few in various locations around the south west USA and luckily for us there was one in Palm Springs and, as we found out later, there would be one opening up in Encinitas within the next few months too.

With Native Foods located and luckily only about 5 minutes drive away, we were out the door and there very quickly and with a big appetite. The temperature outside was still over 100 degrees so we were happy to sit inside under the comfort of the AC. The menu was extensive and amazing so it took us a while to choose and habit saw us enquiring as to what was vegan to then be reminded that it all was. Once decided the food really did live up to our expectations and beyond – it was amazing. In fact it was so good; we bought the recipe book too. We both agreed we would travel to Palm Springs again just for Native Foods in the future (although the opening up on one in Encinitas may not make this necessary on our next trip!).

With an amazing end to an amazing and full day, we headed back to our room for showers and a very welcome sleep. On parking up outside Phil asked me the room number and I told him. We both freaked out when he pushed the door and it opened easily and then he saw a pair of unfamiliar shoes by the inside of the door. I then realized much to our relief that I had told him the wrong room number and we swiftly retreated. However, concerned that our key may have opened somebody else's room I went to reception to tell the guy our discovery from our mistake. He then told me that this was in fact his room and he doesn't normally lock the door anyway so all was well in the end. It was very trusting of him though. With that all sorted out we then retired to bed and the noisy air conditioning.

Friday 9th September 2011

We awoke at a reasonable time in the morning (8.30am). Having arrived in the dark last night I curiously peeked out the curtains to be faced with a sun-blasted rugged mountain side. This had to be best view from any hotel room so far this trip. With Phil still snoozing a bit I decided to go and investigate the free breakfast options. As I approached the door and went to open it I could feel the heat already from outside and when I did open it, the heat hit me like a steam train and the light temporarily blinded me. The breakfast options were pretty much non-existent for us but, upon returning to the room and reporting this to Phil, I could tell he wasn't disappointed and already had some other plan hatching. So I wasn't surprised when he subtly suggested we take it easy this morning (we didn't have to check out until midday anyway) and then cruise

back along to Native Foods for a late breakfast/early lunch. I wasn't going to argue with that. I wrote my postcards and washed my hair, which dried extremely quickly, before we packed up the car and went to reception to check out.

There was a different guy at reception this morning; an older gentleman. He really was quite a character. He wanted to know where we were heading next and when we mentioned Ventura he told us he used to live there on a boat but found it too cold. We were there for a few minutes whilst he told us other little stories but, as interesting and entertaining as he was, we had to get back on the road and head for the coast.

As we got in the car and drove the short distance to Native Foods we noticed the cars thermometer was already indicating 107 degrees. We arrived a touch early before it opened so I took the opportunity of posting my postcards at the Post Office which was conveniently located within the same shopping mall.

Native Foods opened at 11am and we were straight in there. We decided this morning to sit outside under fans and the weird misting device they had for this outside area. It was warm still but pleasant enough. There were different staff on duty this morning and when the waitress enquired whether we had been there before and we answered that we were there last night, she found that really funny! We explained that we had loved it so much and that we wanted to fit another visit in before we left Palm Springs. We insisted that they look into opening a branch up in south west England and then we could take up the offer of a loyalty card that she was now offering.

It was difficult choosing what to have this morning and we wished we could have tried everything but our tummies would not have allowed that. I had the Italian Meatball Sub made from seitan and it was amazing. We vowed to make seitan on return to the UK using the Native Foods recipe in the book we had bought last night.

Reluctantly but with full bellies, we left Native Foods and hit the road west. The highways west were long and straight and the first part was dominated by more acres and acres of wind farms. The 10 west wasn't exactly as interesting as the desert roads we had taken east from Encinitas but it would get us to the coast quite quick. The further west we got towards LA, the more billboards and roadside shopping malls we saw. The air quality seemed to drop too with the slight tinge of dirtiness hanging in the air. As we changed highways around LA, the road surface became either bumpy or the surface created a humming noise as we passed over it. We just kept on motoring, intent on the mission of the day to get to Ventura as quickly as possible. It wasn't about the views today.



We found the hotel on East Thompson Blvd reasonably quickly, being that bit more familiar with the layout of Ventura now. The hotel was run by an Indian couple who were very welcoming but seemed concerned that there were more than 2 of us planning on using our pre-booked room. I assured them that it was just Phil and I. A phone call from the guy to check everything was okay with the room pretty much as soon as we got in there, followed by a visit to just check we were happy with just the shower the room had as opposed to a bath shower, made us wonder whether he was just over enthusiastic or did just want to double check it was just the two of us. The room was quite big and reasonably comfortable and was quite a way back from the noise of the road so we were pleased with that after the long drive.

A short while later after settling in we headed out to the surf shops to look at boards and wetsuits. After visiting quite a few, including the Patagonia outlet, there was little hope of a board but a possibility of a wetsuit from Wavefront surf shop but Phil decided to sleep on it and return tomorrow. He was almost tempted by a board from the surf shop on the main downtown street and even went back twice to look at it. The first time he went in there, I remained in the car as we weren't sure we were parked legally. Whilst parked up a guy came to the passenger window and asked something which I didn't understand but when I replied that I didn't he then asked me if I was Australian. When I corrected him, he took a moment to think and then launched into telling me about a whole US government conspiracy surrounding the death of John Lennon. I nodded

politely and promised I would check out the website address he kept repeating to me – www.lennonmurdertruth.com - and satisfied that I would, he said his goodbyes before Phil returned with his head full of surfboard decisions.

At this point we returned to the hotel to relax a little while and to change as it actually and bizarrely felt quite chilly this evening. We were going to book our next nights' accommodation on the internet but the promised 'good internet connection' wasn't too good at all. After a while we decided to go to Nature's Grill, just up from the downtown surf shop that Phil had been in earlier perusing the board. Nature's Grill isn't totally veggie but it offers quite a good range of vegan food and we knew it had free internet connection. We parked up just around the corner from the main street. As we walked past the surf shop the guy Phil had seen earlier said hello to him which was nice.

The food was good in Nature's Grill (not a patch on Native Foods though) but the internet connection wasn't too good. So after filling our bellies but wondering how we were going to sort out the accommodation for tomorrow, we headed back to the car. Here we found the downtown free internet connection to be better so sat in the car and finally hatched a plan. We were just going to head straight up to San Francisco where Phil knew, from searching around on the internet before we left the UK, that there was a board he would most definitely like at the Mollusk surf shop up there. It would be a long drive but would get the job done hopefully and we were planning on making our way up to Santa Cruz at some point anyway. If we went up quickly on the 101 north then we could then come back on Highway One north to south which is opposite to last trip.

The accommodation in San Francisco and the area around was really quite booked up but eventually we found a reasonably priced hotel in Redwood City, just south of San Francisco by about 40 minutes. We had stayed in Redwood City before but in another hotel, which was nice but totally booked up. This one would have to do. At this point it was getting quite late and we headed back to the hotel, relieved that we had finally sorted out what we were doing. I was sure that travelling was meant to be more relaxing than this so we vowed that we wouldn't leave it quite so late again to sort out our next move and try and stay in the same place for a bit longer in the upcoming days.

On the way back to the room there was a police road block. Loads of cars were turning around before they got to it and we realised on getting nearer that it was a drunk driver check point. Those cars must have had drivers who had their doubts they hadn't had a few too many. It was quite funny watching all the cars run like rats down the side streets as we got nearer! I was driving but had only had one small bottle of beer so had no worries at all so readied my driving licence as instructed by the signs. On pulling up to the cop, I handed over my licence and he realised we were British. He asked whether I had been drinking and I told him that I had had one small bottle of beer. For some reason he thought I had said I had had one small smoke and suddenly looked very bemused. I corrected him and he laughed and asked whether it was American beer and I told him what it was and he said yes it was. He then laughed again and said that as long as it wasn't a pint of British beer it was fine as American beer was very weak. He found great amusement in saying the word 'pint' too. So fully amused, he then waved us on. As he had been so nice it had actually been a good cop experience for us and set us in quite a good mood as we drove the short distance to our hotel room. It was actually quite late now so it then wasn't long before we then went to sleep.

Saturday 10th September 2011 – “Cruise Control”

Today was going to be the day. It had to be. No more days could go by without Phil finding a board to surf with. We got moving in enough time to catch Wavefront surf shop opening at 9am and for Phil to buy a new wetsuit at a cheaper price than he could in the UK.

The guy in the surf shop remembered us from yesterday and was his usual chatty self. Whilst Phil tried a suit we chatted about this and that. He asked where we had eaten last night and when we told him he asked whether there was any particular reason we choose Natures Grill and I told him we were vegan. He seemed a little amazed but then I told him we were really in our sixties and he suddenly exclaimed “no way” before I quickly said I was only joking. He laughed and said he wasn't that gullible and that if that had been the case he would have immediately become vegan. I wasn't convinced that he hadn't at first believed me though. We also got chatting about the economy and how things seemed cheaper in the US, including fuel. When I mentioned the recession in the UK and how lots of people were being made redundant, he asked what redundant was as he had never heard that term. He found that quite amusing as a term.

Once Phil was satisfied with the wet suit he was given a really useful guide on how to easily put this particular style suit on and off. Apparently the guys in the surf shop had decided one day to work out the best way of doing so. Perhaps it had been a particularly slow day, but they had obviously spent some time working out what was best and had even shown the Excel rep how to do this too. Phil was pleased with the extra value in buying the suit at this particular shop not only in financial terms but also in terms of how nice the guy was with the added bonus of the instruction from him. How very Californian though to spend the day working out the best way to put a wetsuit on!

With wet suit bought we were just about to leave when the guy came running out of the shop with a recommendation of a particular route to take on our trip up north. It just so happens that it was the way we had planned to go, but it was really nice of him to tell us about it.

We had the wetsuit; we had a full tank of gas and a full bag of snacks and water, so we pointed north and started driving the 6 ½ hours it would take us. I started driving to see how far I could make it before I would need Phil to take over. We were very quickly on the road that the guy in the surf shop had recommended. It took us off of the 101 freeway and into lighter and less stressful traffic. The views were much nicer too and we were all too quickly having to get back onto the 101 sadly.

The temperature varied between 68 and 95 degrees F and so we were using the AC on and off. We also saw quite a lot of lightning ahead with the occasional weak spot of threatening rain. With just the open road and a few hours of driving ahead I demanded Phil put on some good music and I used the cruise control for the first time. It was a real godsend as it meant I could move my legs around and stretch them. I wondered when Americans would invent something which meant that you didn't have to even steer as well as not change gear or use the accelerator or brakes.

Really it was just a case of pointing north and driving today so any distractions were welcome. We went passed a 'Correctional Facility' which to you and me is a prison but to Phil at that particular moment was a Tippex factory. Even our odometer going over 1000 miles so far was an event today. The freeway wasn't too busy really and we passed quite a lot of agricultural land, including garlic farms which pleased me as you could actually smell garlic in the air. Phil on the other hand, wasn't so smitten with the odour of garlic. As we neared San Francisco the traffic started to pick up a bit and, with me still driving but feeling pretty good, Phil took on the role of navigator.

We found Mollusk surf shop pretty easily except one last minute navigational problem. As we walked into the high ceilinged shop, I spotted a sofa in the middle immediately made for that. I wanted to be still and comfy for a few moments whilst Phil perused this amazing board that we had driven up here for. He looked at others too whilst we were there but only had eyes really for this one. I was really pleased it lived up to his expectations as these expectations had been from before we had even left the UK when he found it for sale on-line. I pretty much told the guy in the surf shop how relieved I was as we had travelled so far for it. Phil chatted to him for a while. He asked us whereabouts in the UK we were from and when we told him Cornwall he said that only last night he had been watching the TV series Doc Martin and how he had said to his wife how beautiful it looked in Cornwall.

Phil tried to find a board bag for the board there but to no avail so we would have to look elsewhere for that. The guy gave him a good tip about packing it for travel though in that he always used cardboard along the rails. Phil took that on board and we made a point of collecting some at some point for the return journey to the UK. With that we headed back out of San Francisco with Phil's new board safely stowed in the back.

Redwood City is about forty minutes south of San Francisco and that is where we were heading for the hotel. We had a few rounds of the block before we found it but got there in the end. It was in a bit of a seedy area and we weren't that enamoured with the room as it was tiny but full of mirrors in an effort to make it look bigger. The door looked like it had been kicked in at one point or another too which didn't fill us with loads of confidence but then the hotel was operated with security swipe in the foyer so that at least was some comfort and the wireless signal was excellent.



Phil carefully manoeuvred his new board into the small room for a really close inspection and satisfied, he then found a space for it under the bed. I searched for accommodation and planned our next move which was to be a few days stay in Santa Cruz and finding the hotel we had stayed in before to have free rooms, I swiftly secured these.

As we had been a little disorientated earlier in finding the hotel, we decided to check the directions from the hotel to the nearest Wholefood Market where we could grab some food. As suspected it was within easy walking distance so we took to the street and back to the familiar and good food choices that this huge health food supermarket could offer us. We ate in Wholefoods but, as usual, found that our eyes were bigger than our bellies and we so left with some leftover pizza. On returning to the room and dropping off the pizza, we decided it might be quite nice to be sociable for once and look for somewhere to have a beer. We started at the bar opposite the hotel but found it not to be particularly welcoming so tried another, to the same conclusion. We walked up and down the street the hotel was on and then round the block but could find nowhere that particularly inspired us to be sociable so, dropping into a small corner shop to buy some bottles of beer, we returned to our room to drink them, watch a spot of TV (there was some kind of BMX competition showing so Phil was quite content), nibble on the leftover pizza and do a catch up on the journal before we finally turned in for sleep after our long driving but successful board finding day.

Sunday 11th September 2011 – “Cruzing”

Today was a relatively short drive for us so we were in no particular rush. We took our time getting ready and then drove to the Wholefood Market to get some breakfast. We both got a hot soya chai and, as it was too hot to drink straight away, we drove the relatively short twenty minute distance to Half Moon Bay on the coast before we tackled it, along with our breakfast food.

Tummies filled and sea gazing done, we headed south on Highway One towards Santa Cruz. As we were in no hurry, and with Phil's new board shouting to be surfed, we took our time hopping down the One looking for surf. Unfortunately, the gods of the waves were not presenting good enough waves for Phil to chance the sharkey waters and before long we were hitting the outskirts of Santa Cruz.

We decided to try and book in to the hotel before the stated book in time but unfortunately the room was not ready. However, we were told that it was no problem to leave the car in the hotel car park and so did so before walking the short distance to the main downtown street. There we found the usual collection of the weird and the wonderful, as is the norm in Santa Cruz; hippies, students, suited professionals, surfers, buskers and a man with a rabbit balanced on his head. Santa Cruz never disappoints in the area of entertainment and people watching. We checked out the bookstore, had a wander around the 'flea' market that was on today and discovered an amazing shop that sold nuts and dried fruit. In the latter you could sample before you buy so we abused this to the full but then we did also buy several bags of various nuts between us.

We eventually drifted back to the hotel to check in. We were offered essentially an upgrade to one of the newly refurbished rooms which we accepted but upon inspection we weren't particularly happy with the security on one of the screened doors into the room so we returned to reception and asked to change rooms. They did so without a problem and we found our new room to be more satisfactory in the security department and settled in to relax for a bit with the knowledge that we didn't have to move tomorrow.

After quite a bit of relaxing we decided to head back into town for a spot of dinner. The guy at reception had suggested a restaurant called the Asian Rose or more recently Malabar which happened to be Sri Lankan. He said the guy there could do good vegan food and that we should mention that he had recommended the place and the owner would make sure he gave us a good meal. We found the restaurant with ease and after only a short walk and, as we were told, once we mentioned the recommendation, the owner said that he would look after us. The food was good but I was more impressed than Phil was with the complete end results. The owner was a strange character who was overly anxious to impress and if we even remotely mentioned anything not amazing about the food, he scurried off and brought us more food or an alternative so all in all, we couldn't fault his enthusiasm.

As per Buddhist principles, the restaurant did not serve alcohol so we had not had a drop to drink. However, a walk back down the main downtown street back to the hotel was enough to stir a slight feeling of intoxication as we passed a couple of guys chatting whilst strolling down the street, one of which very casually had a parrot perched on his arm. If you think Santa Cruz is a little off kilter during the day, try it after dark. On returning to the room and attempting to sleep we discovered our change of room had landed us immediately over the top of a noisy group of guys in the room below but eventually into the wee hours they calmed down and we were able to catch some sleep.

Monday 12th September 2011 – “Cruzing for a bruising”

Having lost sleep last night with the noisy neighbours below we managed to stay in bed until 9.30am, despite the noisy room service accessing their cleaning cupboard outside our room. We had the luxury this morning of not having to move anywhere. Once out of bed I did my usual morning physio exercises to unstiffen my back followed by a spot of washing that the opportunity of staying in the same place for longer offered in terms of drying time. I then went to check out the breakfast options at the hotel but found that the only thing we could or would want to consume was orange juice. We decided to just rely on the snacks that we had accumulated, including the nuts we had purchased yesterday, to get us through the day today.





We decided to go hunting for surf and started off driving around the West Marine Drive to overlook Steamer Lane. No real options here for surf but we did stick around for a bit watching a stand up paddle boarder gently paddling around a school of dolphins not far from the wharf. After a while we tore ourselves away and headed north on the One to continue our check for surf. It wasn't looking good and Phil was understandably nervous of any shark action. These cooler waters of further north are notorious for being sharkey and his guide book to this area's surf spots seem to take great pleasure in telling lots of horror stories of attacks. I was nervous of him going in to surf where there was nobody else around but would have been more realistic in my concerns where there were other surfers.

Eventually we had gone about as far north as we wanted to go in terms of hunting for surf to no avail so decided to turn around. We investigated a few more spots on the way back and then the last spot we checked, with me remaining in the car whilst Phil took the 10 minute stroll to the beach, surprised us both by yielding results. The surf was up and there were surfers out there. So with that Phil got changed, prepared his board and I got my camera kit ready. A few minutes later we were on a beautiful beach. There was a small lagoon area where hundreds of birds were hanging out and quite big cliffs on





either side. I settled myself into a nice spot on the sand whilst Phil paddled out. A few waves later and he was getting into the swing of things more whilst I took photos of him and other interesting things around the beach. We had been worried that other surfers might have got a bit upset at me taking photos of this potentially secret spot (after all we couldn't find it in the guide books) but none of the surfers walking past made any comments. Phil on the other hand did get quite a few remarks from the locals in the water and, although not overly threatening, it did make him feel not too welcome. One female surfer however did indicate to him to go for a wave when she knew she was going to miss it in the line up so it wasn't all bad.

So new board christened in this unknown spot and having survived the sharks and the locals without any brawls, we headed back to the hotel. After dropping everything off, we then decided to go and have a look at Capitola, a small town that sits pretty much next to Santa Cruz just east along the coast. I had wanted to go there last time we were here but we had run out of time. Having seen a photo of a view of the seafront I thought it looked like quite an interesting little place as there was a row of brightly coloured houses right next to the wharf. We took our time travelling there hopping along the coast just checking out beaches and surf spots before we finally reached the downtown area. We found a spot to park and fed a meter with change and then went for a stroll. It didn't take long as there really wasn't much here. Most shops were closed by now but even so it seemed quite a small little downtown area with not huge amounts to hold our interest. We moved on to investigate the brightly coloured houses down on the front only to discover that they were in fact part of a hotel and the whole area was strictly private. My whole illusion of an artsy quaint sea front street was shattered. A quick stroll along the wharf and we were basically done with Capitola as the dark descended and the cold started to creep in.

We returned back to the hotel on the supposedly shorter route but got a little lost. Eventually we were back and parked up at the hotel before we then walked into downtown and to the quirky Saturn Cafe, where we had been on our last trip and enjoyed. In fact back in 1987 whilst visiting my sister, who at the time lived in Santa Cruz whilst studying at UCSC, she had taken me to the Saturn Cafe and I had always remembered it. It was now in a different location but pretty much had the same alternative and youthful vibe. It also served up big portions of lovely vegan choices at a reasonable price along with good vegan ale. Last time we had fallen in to the trap of having a pitcher too far of the ale and had left really quite tiddly. This time we were a little more conservative. The food was really good but we did, as ever, over order when we optimistically went for vegan pancakes and maple syrup for dessert so that went back to the hotel with us for breakfast tomorrow. Bellies once more full we settled in for our second night at the Bay Front Hotel.

Tuesday 13th September 2011 – “Into the Trees”

We stayed in bed despite the noise just outside our room from the room service until 10am. Phil had not had a good night's sleep. Regardless we went to check out the surf but found it to not be too good again. It is so typical that the last time we were here all the classic surf spots were firing but Phil couldn't surf them due to the fact that he had badly hurt his rib snowboarding in Alaska just beforehand. Now tired, but fully fit, we were having problems on this trip finding good surf.



We headed for Staff of Life, a really good large health food store in Santa Cruz, to console ourselves with a nice drink and some good food for breakfast/lunch, a bit to nibble now and then taking the rest with us for later. We had already decided that if the surf was no good we would head inland to Big Basin Redwoods State Park for a hike. This was another thing I had been keen to do last time but we had not got around to doing. This park was one of the first state parks in California to be set up.

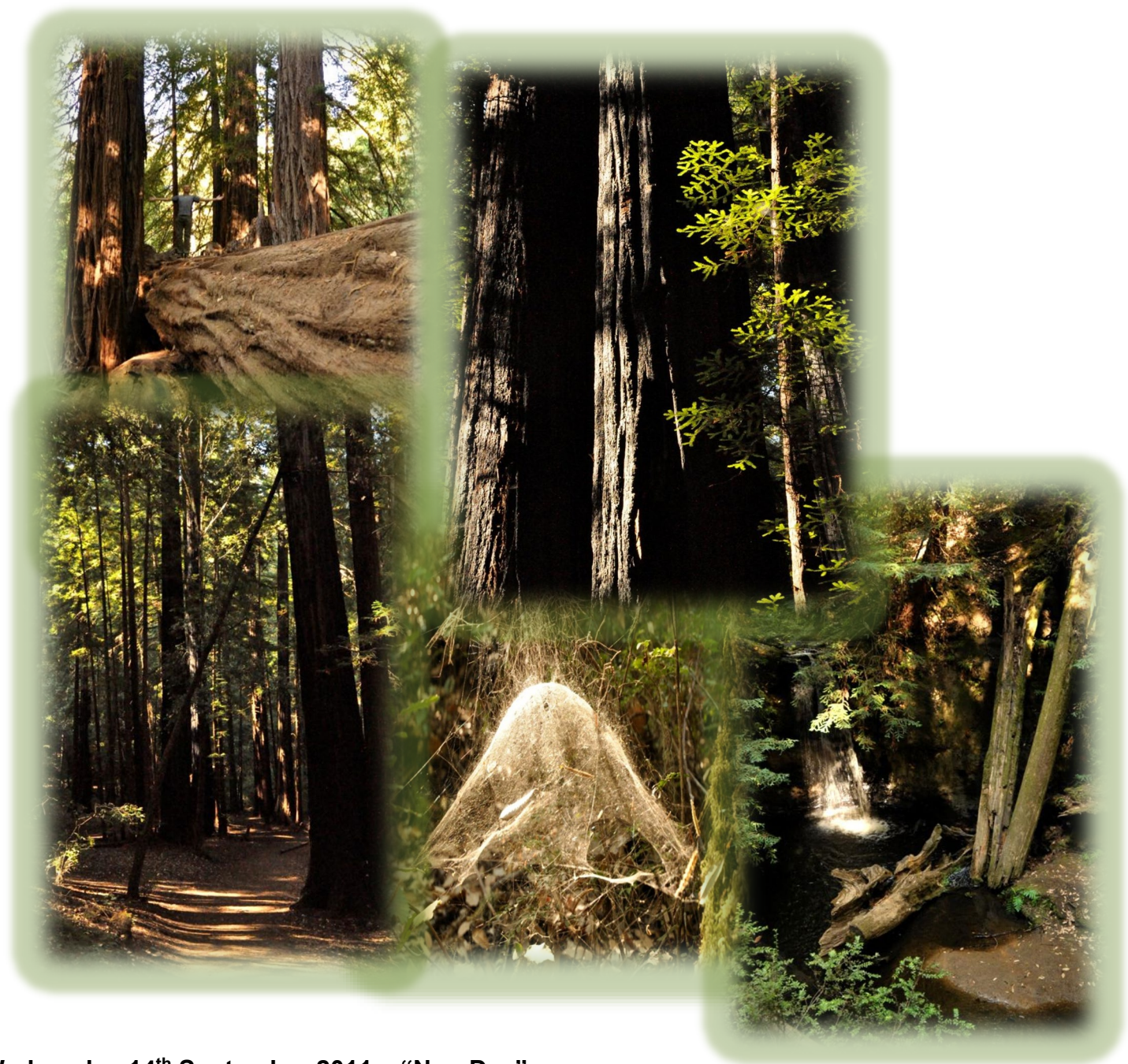
As we drove inland on Highway 9 the temperature began to rise and the faint smell of skunk hung in the air. At a crossroads in a place called Felton and whilst sat at the lights, Phil noticed a Scooby Doo Mystery Machine van parked up on a garage forecourt. We couldn't pass up an opportunity like that and so Phil pulled in to the forecourt and took a photo of me stood beside it whilst traffic passed by probably wondering what all the fuss was about.

When we arrived at the State Park, it was 82 degrees. It seemed a little crazy wearing trousers but we knew of the possibility of poisoned oak, ticks and mossies up here so thought it for the best. We went to the headquarters and paid our fee and also got advice on the possible hiking trails with a map as a guide. We decided on a 5 mile trail and after a quick snack and packing up more snacks, water and camera gear, we headed off on the trail head. It wasn't long before I was bitten so that confirmed the wise decision to wear trousers. Despite the tree cover it was really hot so when we hit a steep rock incline exposed to the sun completely, it was really hot. The light on the Redwoods was amazing. Phil also saw a snake poking its head out of a hole but I was too slow so didn't get a photo and there were loads of amazing spider web domes in the trees which I made several attempts to try and capture with a photo.



On arriving back to the car and the park headquarters we decided to do the half mile trail called the Redwoods Trail, along which were some of the biggest trees in the park. It reminded us a little of the big Kauai trees in New Zealand and a particular day when we had hiked on a trail that was specifically to view some of the biggest of these trees. That day it had been absolutely teeming down with rain and we had got thoroughly soaked so it was nice to leisurely walk amongst these Californian giants in the heat and the warmth.

On the way back to Santa Cruz and just outside the park, a deer ran across the road in front of us. We stopped to see it was still visible but it was already well camouflaged in amongst the trees. We were now heading back to Staff of Life for a proper look around this great independent health store and also to find some dinner to take back to our room for later. By the time we had done this and got back to the room it was already dark. We ate our food whilst watching, but not really watching, the TV and then once our food had gone down sufficiently, we had a quick read before sleep.



Wednesday 14th September 2011 – “Non Day”

Phil had had another night of no sleep and toothache had kicked in too part way through the night. He had had problems with his teeth just before we had left but this had, we assumed, been sorted out at the dentist. It would be a bit of a nightmare if it all kicked in again but then I reassured Phil that we were in California where there were loads of good dentists (probably a lot better than the UK) and that we had good travel insurance. It would be a slightly more scary thought if we were in India or Sri Lanka.

We stayed in bed till past 10am trying to make up for lost sleep. We had no specific plans today and it was even harder to think about what to do with Phil tired and in some pain. Rather than stay in our room though I suggested that I would like to go and check out a garden centre nearby as I would like to look for unusual vegetable seeds in particular. We found the garden centre quite quickly. Being the USA I had imagined it was going to be a huge affair, bigger than our large garden centres over here but this place was relatively tiny in comparison but they did have an interesting selection of seeds, so much so I had trouble choosing between them. Whilst I was doing so a man came in and asked the lady at the cash desk whether they had any 'ladybugs'. She answered yes and took him just around the corner and they both returned to the desk with him holding a small plastic round container. I was intrigued and broke off browsing seeds to go around the corner to have a look. There I found a refrigerator with lots of plastic containers in with all manner of biological pest control critters in. I took out a ladybug, or as we know them 'ladybirds', container and peeked inside through the mesh to see what must have been maybe thousands of them peeking back out at me. I use biological pest control in the form of nematodes, microscopic critters that you dilute with water to revive and then water into the garden, but had never known about actually the sale of things like ladybirds for the same purpose. They even had praying mantis in there!

Seeds then finally chosen and paid for, my next suggestion was to check out a Patagonia Outlet I had found to be nearby. Patagonia is one of our favourite clothing companies, particularly so for its environmental policies but it is normally quite expensive so the chance of a bargain or two at an outlet store was enticing. Unfortunately there was nothing there to lure us to buy but there was a very chatty and friendly guy working there who spoke to both of us quite a lot. I was wearing a T-shirt from home that had different animal tracks on the front which were all labelled. The last track was a bear track and underneath is just labelled with the word 'Run!'. This really amused the guy and then we went into discussion about that fact that some say you should run when a bear approaches and others say you should curl up into a ball whilst others still say you should make yourself look bigger and shout lots. We both agreed you would probably forget all the advice if it happened and just go with instinct which, to honest, would probably be to run with me!

After the Patagonia outlet we found that we were only just down the road from Staff of Life and, with lunchtime looming, it was a damn fine excuse to go and get a treat or two for lunch. We took our chosen lunch back past the hotel and onto West Cliff Drive and found a vacant bench overlooking Steamer Lane surf spot to eat it on whilst watching the surfing. Typically, with Phil too tired to contemplate surfing, it was quite good surf and there was some kind of kids surf competition going on. Out to sea you could see a dark strip along and above the water. It was cormorants on and flying above the water. I watched this for a while before I realised that this line in the water and, even more amazingly, the line of birds flying went on and on and on. It must have stretched for miles without a break. I really thought that at some point it would stop somewhere but every time I looked back to it, over quite a considerable amount of time, it was still going on. There must have been thousands and thousands of them out there.

After sitting there for quite some time watching we decided to go and take a drive along West Cliff Drive and to Natural Arches State Park. We drove into the car park but we were unwilling to pay the park fee to explore the beach more at this stage so we just sat overlooking the beach for a bit. You could still see the cormorants out to sea. We then drove back along West Cliff Drive before returning to the room. Phil decided he wanted to try and have a sleep so I decided to do into town as I wanted to get some more money out. I also had a little look around the downtown health store and bought some water to take back. After a while of wandering I headed back to the room to discover that Phil hadn't managed to sleep at all.

Before it got dark we decided to go for a walk along the boardwalk and the wharf as we hadn't done that yet on this trip. The wharf is only about 5 minutes from the hotel so we were soon there and walking along. There are seals that hang out under the end of the wharf and you can hear them long before you see them. There are a couple of viewing points cut into the middle of the wharf so you can see them but there were not as many in residence this time as on the last trip. We watched them for a while as the dark descended. We were going to walk along the boardwalk but by then it was dark and getting really quite cold (since being in the desert we were feeling the cold more!) so we headed back to the room. We needed to sort out our next move tomorrow so I fired up the internet to discover that the signal was really weak this evening and it was impossible to work with. However, I managed to get into the neighbouring hotels wireless network using the zip code as the password. This is often the case in some of the bigger hotels that they are not particularly creative with their wireless internet passwords and either the zip code (postcode to you or me) or the telephone number is often used. The speed of this internet connection was excellent and very soon we had decided on moving down to Monterrey for a night tomorrow. We had stayed in Monterrey two nights on the last trip but bizarrely, due to exploring trails and places along the Big Sur, we hadn't actually explored Monterrey.

Tomorrows plans confirmed and in the bag, we ate whilst watching a bit of crap on the TV and then I caught up on a few Booking.com hotels reviews from the trip. We rely quite heavily on Booking.com to book our accommodation on these trips and always make our decision on where to stay based on other people's reviews so it only seems right that we should input into this process as well. A quick check of emails followed and then we both attempted to get some sleep.

Thursday 15th September 2011 – “What is it about Santa Cruz?”

Phil had had a better night's sleep but had taken painkillers which I had gone and got from the car at around 3am. What is it about Santa Cruz? The last time we had been here it was frustrating with Phil being encumbered with his injured rib and now this time he had teeth problems. You begin to wonder whether there is something about Santa Cruz that rejects us. It is a funny place as well though. There is a real alternative feel to it and yet at the same time it has a funny sense of threat. We on the one hand were ready to leave but on the other hand, wanted to stay. It has a certain hold over you that is hard to explain. We both know however that we would always want to return to it and hopefully the next time we do, we won't have any problems to contend with.

We got out of bed around 9.30am and started to get our stuff packed and together. We finished the pancakes from the Saturn Cafe that had been in the fridge for breakfast. After checking out we decided to go and check the surf along West Cliff Drive one final time as Phil was feeling a bit better now with the benefit of a better sleep. Typically, it was no good here. We drove out via Capitola to check too and it was better but parking would have been a problem so we decided to head south and leave the weirdness and unpredictability of Santa Cruz behind.



On the way down to Monterey is a place called Moss Landing. On our previous trip heading north we had stopped here and parked up in a reserve area to eat some lunch and discovered by accident we were parked next to floating mass of sea otters. We had initially just thought it was seaweed or something and then the realisation had hit with great excitement. So this time I really wanted to go and 'see the boys' again (this area is where the male otters we were reliably informed hang out). There they were again in exactly the same place, despite the different time of year, all just hanging out together in a big floating barge of brown fur. Every now and then one of them would twist around and around in the water or float away a bit but generally they were really chilled out. There were a few other people watching them from this spot too.





Over the other side of the lagoon and on a boat pontoon I could see a load of seals that hadn't been there last time so after a while I told Phil I would like to go and take a look at them. We didn't have far to drive today so we had the luxury of time to do such things as stare in wonder at these amazing beasts. We parked up nearby in a boatyard car park and strolled along to overlook the pontoon. It was heaving with massive, noisy, smelly seals with hardly a space free. Some seals were even balanced or crawling over others, much to the vocal protest of those underneath. They didn't really take much notice of us as we watched this seal 'soap opera' unfold. I took loads of photos, fascinated by the different interactions and probably would have stayed there all day. However, despite the luxury of time we had today, after a while we felt we should move on.

Nearing the outskirts of Monterrey we remembered an REI store we had been to before and decided to go and take a look. I wanted to find a present to take back for our next door neighbours as they were keeping an eye on our house and also watering our garden for us. I decided I wanted to find a present for their young daughter Tean and thought this would be a good place to look. At first I couldn't find anything and neither could Phil but then suddenly I saw a cuddly seagull that when squeezed emitted the call of the bird. As we always had seagulls nesting on our roofs and there was the yearly ritual of popping back the youngsters when they fell off, we had always had much discussion about them over the years with our neighbours. This cuddly gull was a Californian gull chick so it seemed the ideal gift to take back.





We found our hotel relatively easily and earlier than the check in time stated. However the lady at the hotel was really lovely and it was no problem to check in early at all. We chatted for some time whilst checking in and it turned out that she had family in Milton Keynes, near where Phil originally came from. The room was lovely and had to win hands down as being the cleanest one on the trip. It was spotless. The internet however was not really any good and I knew that later I wanted to sort out booking the next room. I noticed there was a network socket on the wall and went to reception to enquire whether they had a cable I could borrow. Eventually the young man at the desk found one in a drawer that he kindly lent me and once plugged in the connection was excellent so I knew that we would have no problem booking our room later.



After settling in a bit however we wanted to head into Monterey to explore. We found a free parking spot slightly out of downtown but still only a relatively short walk away and began exploring downtown. Surprisingly it didn't take long and was much smaller and different to how we had expected it to be. The shops held no interest for us either. There was however a classic car rally taking place in the main street so we spent some time checking out the old Chevy's and Cadillac's that were immaculately presented. I took a few photos to show my dad and my uncle at some point as my uncle actually has an old Cadillac somewhere stored in a dusty garage. With downtown sussed out we then headed seawards to the famous Fisherman's Wharf. It was an intriguing wharf reminiscent of tacky seaside towns in the south east of England with colourful restaurants, candy stores, fish merchants and beach stores all crammed along its relatively short length. From here we wandered further along the seafront towards an area called Cannery Row. We are not sure whether we found the right area or not but there wasn't much there to be honest so we walked back towards town at a leisurely pace enjoying the seals and birdlife along the way.





On arriving back at the car we were a little disappointed with Monterrey and wondered whether we had just missed something without knowing. We decided to push on to Carmel, another area we had an interest in exploring last time and never managed to. This was Clint Eastwood territory, being that he was the mayor. This town seemed more like what I had imagined Monterrey to be like.

We drove down to the beach first and parked up and then walked onto the beach to overlook. The sun was just starting to set in a beautiful orange glow and you could see dolphins messing around in the breaking waves. There seemed to be loads of other people on the beach enjoying this natural spectacle this evening. We stood for some time soaking it in and chatted for a while to a couple stood next to us. They wanted to visit the UK and we told them where we were from and that it was a much nicer area to visit than just going to London as that really didn't give much of an idea of what the UK was like.

As the sun slipped behind the horizon we drove back the short distance into town and parked up to explore around the shops. Most of them were shut or shutting now but they were mostly arty and expensive shops anyway so not really our style. It was the time of evening when the restaurants were filling out. We wandered around a few of the blocks of shops, enjoying the small town feel of Monterrey. Bizarrely there was a Lush store there in the middle of it all. Lush is a British company that sells natural toiletries and you can often smell the stores before you see them, as was the case here, despite it being closed. We also passed a guy who looked like he was homeless and amongst all this slightly upmarket chic, he seemed out of place or maybe he had the right idea as people who lived around here would certainly have cash to spare. Either way, I noticed he was reading Rolling Stone magazine and I found that quite ironic as certainly, 'a rolling stone gathers no moss'. I would have taken a photo of him had I not been too shy to ask and the light been not very good now.

A short distance from Carmel we had sussed out a Vietnamese restaurant called Man Chay that apparently did amazing vegan food. We found this after a little search and consequently had an interesting meal there. I say interesting as it was quite unlike any meal we had had before in many ways. It didn't 'knock our socks off' but we were glad that we had explored this food from a culinary point of view. Tummies full we then headed back to the room to plan our next night's



accommodation. We had made the decision that we wanted to return to the Encinitas area, down near San Diego. We wanted the luxury of the warmth again and less sharkey waters. However, this would be a bit of a mission in one drive and we wanted to take the drive south on Highway One and through the Big Sur at our leisure so we found a room in Ventura to book. The reviews weren't great but all other better options were booked up, including the hotel we had stayed at on the way up. With a room over our heads sorted for tomorrow we then turned in for the night.

Friday 16th September 2011 – “A Different Approach”

We had an earlyish start this morning. For some reason though I did find some time to just quickly check emails and found an email, via Booking.com, from the hotel we were staying in tonight. They said there had been a plumbing problem in the room we had booked so were offering a bigger room at the same price and would this be okay. Obviously it was so I quickly replied before we did our final pack up and then went to reception to give the internet cable and key back to reception. There was nobody around reception for quite a while, despite the efforts of trying to call someone that myself and another guest were making. There was an old Hindu lady around the corner doing a morning ceremony but I didn't want to disturb her. Eventually somebody appeared with no explanation for the delay and we were able to get on our way.

Our first stop was the Monterrey Wholefoods to stock up on snacks and breakfast for the journey. When we had been here before a really nice cashier called Terrey had always talked to us so we wondering if she was going to be here again and



whether she would recognise us. Unfortunately we didn't see her but I did recognise the lady that was serving at the drinks counter. Last time she had not understood a word I had said so I made an extra effort to speak very clearly and it didn't seem a problem this time. We stocked up with chai lattes (not the best we'd had) and bolanis and pointed the car towards Highway One. This time we were pointing a different direction in the hopes that the north to south journey would offer us equally beautiful but different views.

We knew we had quite a distance to go today but equally we didn't want to rush so we made frequent stops to take in the views. The weather was dry but not completely clear unfortunately; enough though to be able to enjoy it. We hit quite an area of road works at one point, a reminder that landslides are a frequent issue along this coastal road. There was also a new bridge being construction across one long section and we delayed there for quite some time in the one way lights.



At one point we saw a couple of women with something which looked like a TV aerial. We realised they were probably doing surveying or tracking wildlife survey and given that this was at the end of the whale migration, we assumed it was probably whales they were interested in. We had been watching out for whales the whole so, assuming they might be on to something, stopped for some time a short distance away hoping to see some. Unfortunately we didn't, although further up the road we caught sight of a few dolphins messing around in the water.

At Ragged Point, an area we hadn't previously stopped in, we pulled in as I had decided I really fancied another chai tea. We found a little cafe and enquired whether they could do a soya chai and the response from the enthusiastic gentleman owner



was of course he could and it was the best chai in all of California. This guy was quite a character and chatted away the whole time he prepared our drinks. He even proudly showed us a photo of his actress daughter once he discovered we were British as she had played a major role in the film 'Pride and Prejudice' and had lived with Keira Knightley to learn how to speak with a British accent. He was obviously very proud and even told us that she had bought him his present house. The chai was pretty good so we took the rest of what he had said to be true. We heard him repeating it constantly to other customers sat outside at every opportunity.

After finishing our chai we took a stroll around and found the gardens to be full of hummingbirds flitting from flower to flower. I tried to photograph them but found myself chasing from one side of the garden to the other. Eventually I got a few shots before we got back on the road. A little way along the road we saw a bearded hippy guy pushing a bike full of luggage. He was talking to himself quite happily. We had noticed him further back on the highway so he must have caught up with us whilst we had stopped. We wondered whether he was travelling the whole distance of the One and what his story was.

Our journey continued with sightings of a single surfer at San Simeon, squirrels, more dolphins and zebras in the extended grounds of Hearst Castle by the side of the road. The latter made us do a double take as we past. As the cliffs retracted away from the left side of the road and the coastal land started to flatten out a bit, we were now approaching Morro Bay and we could make out the big 'island' that sat in the bay. It isn't really an island as there is a land spit with a road out to it but this



rock stands so huge over the flatter beach area, it looks like one. We parked in its shadow to look at the surf in the North Morro bay and at 2-3 ft and clean, Phil decided it was looking good to go in. He had a fairly good and friendly surf. I sat amongst the rocks at the edge of the beach photographing the odd wave here and there that he caught but was a little distracted by the squirrels. I had remembered them from last time we were here and had been looking forward to seeing them again as they are a friendly bunch. They are of course driven by begging for food but they are friendly about it, sitting beside or behind you and then gently taking it from your fingers before storing it in their pouch and reaching forward for more. Needless to say they managed to bribe me out of quite a few nuts but they were good company and I found myself freely chatting to them in between shots of them and Phil surfing. I did have a weird phenomenon happen whilst I was photographing though and I did wonder whether they were trying to cast a spell on me in an effort to get more nuts out of me. I would see 'fairy lights' when looking through the camera which would then disappear once I wasn't looking through the camera. Never had that before and never since.



Having had a decent surf, Phil came out and changed and we got back on the road. We still had a bit of a way to go. Our next stop was Santa Barbara to get some food for dinner to take with us to the hotel. We followed the One as far as we could and then hit the 101 south. After the relative calm of the One, hitting the much busier freeway was a bit of a shock. At one junction we found ourselves getting squeezed by traffic which gave us a bit of a scare. I was driving and could see the slip road coming on to freeway with traffic coming down it but I had nowhere to pull out to give them room so I assumed the traffic would make every effort to slow down to slot in with the freeway traffic but it didn't. One particular car just carried on to the freeway at the same speed forcing me to suddenly pull up to stop being squeezed by traffic from both sides. Maybe there is something we don't know in terms of Highway Code when it comes to junction approaches onto freeways but thankfully this was the only time this had happened and we kept an eye out for it in future.

We reached the Santa Barbara Wholefood Market after dark and anxious to get to the hotel before too late, we choose our dinner options quickly. We had met the manager of the store David Moorman and had had quite a few chats the last time we were here, even exchanging email addresses, so had hoped to have at least seen him to say hello. After asking a member of staff they told us that he wasn't working this evening. Next stop was the hotel in Ventura about 30 minutes or so down the road south. We found it relatively easily but it didn't seem like it was in the best part of town and we hoped the bad reviews we had read about the place weren't too accurate. We had, after all, not had much of a choice for this evening's accommodation.

I went to the reception desk and found an extremely random lady in charge. She didn't seem to know what she was doing and seemed to already be in dispute with a very polite black guy at the reception desk. After she had dealt with him, although he left in not an extremely satisfied manner, she dealt with us. She was pleasant enough but just very random. She mentioned how nice the room was she had for us and it turned out that the plumbing problem had been fixed in our other originally booked room but they had still left us in the bigger room. I didn't have a good vibe about this place and wasn't very happy that she had taken a copy of my credit card in one of those old fashioned print duplicate machines. She kept saying it was for 'him' and 'his' records. Normally with Booking.com the money is taken from your card details that were sent with the electronic booking. She gave us the key and told us where the room was and we drove over to nearer to unpack. The room was far from delightful but would be adequate for one night. I however, still had a nagging thought about that card copy so went back to reception to ask more questions. She was evasive but when I asked to see the copy again, she showed me and I took it from her hands when I noticed that no amount was written in. I quickly rectified this and made sure I did it in such a way that it couldn't be altered and then once a bit happier, left to return to the room. Phil asked me on returning whether she had told me an internet password. She hadn't but I thought it was then Phil's turn to go and see her again this time! He returned with the password and said that she had just asked again whether we liked the room. On closing the door behind him, Phil reached for the nearest chair and put it under the door knob. We both realised at this point that there was no way on earth we would be staying here more than this one night so swiftly set about booking our next nights' accommodation on line. We wanted the hell out of Bayshore Inn and we wanted to head back down to the warmth of Encinitas again. We couldn't get into the Econolodge at Encinitas until the following night so had to book another Econolodge nearby in Escondido for the first night and then, for the rest of our stay, we managed to secure a room in our favourite in Econolodge in Encinitas. Feeling confident in the plans for the rest of our trip made staying the one night in this place a little more bearable and the beer helped a little. We ate our food, watched a bit of TV and then turned in for sleep.

Saturday 17th September 2011 – “Noisy Neighbours”

Phil didn't get the best of sleeps which isn't surprising giving our environment of randomness so I said I would take on the driving to get the 'hell out of dodge'. First stop was to fuel up and then we drove to the seafront at Ventura for a final glance and to have smoothies and snacks for breakfast. There was a surf competition going on near the main break so we couldn't get parked up there and went a bit further up for parking space and a quiet section of wall to perch on. Afterwards we made our way to the surf shop where Phil had bought his wetsuit as he needed to find a board bag for his new board. The cool dude was there and was his usual chatty self. Unfortunately there wasn't a suitable bag there which is disappointing as he is the kind of guy that you want to buy stuff off of. We moved on to Ventura Surf Shop and Phil found some possibilities but was now deliberating whether, now we were heading south, he would consider the other board he had seen in the San Clemente Icons of Surf shop. So would he need a single or a double board bag? He finally settled on the single as it would probably fit two in anyway and he didn't think he would end up with the other board. I stayed out of it as my life is complicated enough most of the time without having to consider how many boards were too many!

With the board bag 'in the bag' (as it were), we finally got out on to the road on our 3 hour journey southwards. We had LA to negotiate on the freeways and the traffic was really heavy. I guess the weekend isn't a good time to be travelling south and we paid for this decision with an extra 2 hours on the expected journey time. We finally got to Escondido and found the Econolodge easily. We checked in and set about relaxing a bit, combined with doing a bit of a money 'tot' up and photo download. The relaxing part of it didn't last too long though as some guys arrived to the room next door. One of them in particular was really drunk and preceded to offer to have a fight with another guy. There was lots of shouting, swearing and general unrelaxing behaviour. They were also right outside our door smoking so that kind of messed up the idea of a non-smoking room as we had to keep the door and the window closed in order to keep the smoke smell out. We went outside to confront them and they said "are we disturbing you" to which we obviously said yes. One guy, who seemed to be the drunken guys boss assured us that the drunk guy wouldn't be a problem and they would be quiet but we weren't prepared to take the chance of not getting a good night's sleep. I therefore went to reception to request moving rooms. Reception was sympathetic but not terribly helpful as they said that there were no other no-smoking rooms. The woman also said that the guys had been staying there for a while now and had not been a problem before and they also had to leave really early in the morning to go and do a job in LA. We were told to ring reception if they were a problem but we were left feeling that we were just being complaining stuck up Brits. We had no choice but to stick with our current room. I returned to the room to report this to Phil. The guy continued to be an arse and at one point we heard him talking about us and saying 'where is her old man then and why doesn't he come out'. At this both of us had had it and both jumped up to go outside and confront them again. They were inside their room at this point and we stood at the door pointing at the drunk saying, 'is he going to be a problem?' I also added, for some bizarre reason, that we might be British but it doesn't mean we are a push over and won't get extremely pissed off if he continues his behaviour. Why I said that is a mystery but regardless, one of the guys jumped up and spent some time assuring us again that it would be fine. We again returned to our room, but a while later decided we would be better heading out rather than winding ourselves up listening to them.

Jimbo's Health Store was quite near and so we started there with having a good look around this independent health store and then sat down there for food as well. There was a group of middle aged people in the seated area drinking coffee and having quite a full on political debate about various things. It seemed as it was a regular meeting event for them and it reassured me that there were still plenty of people out there 'who cared' enough about stuff. After food we drove over to the big Barnes and Noble bookstore a few blocks up. This was our idea of a great night out; good food, a health food store followed by a big book store! The bookstore was open till 11pm. We decided that if there was a big bookstore near home that was open till late in the evening we would probably go out more in the evenings!! Here too, just around the corner from the cookbook section where I initially headed for, there was another group of, this time younger, people robustly debating. This time it was a disagreement about a chemical formula or reaction. We spent some time browsing resulting in me buying two books. Phil deliberated a book but in the end decided against it.

On returning back to the room everything seemed reasonably quiet except for the odd giggle from next door. I had a quick shower, trying to avoid the big crack that was leaking water underneath the bath (although thankfully not in to the actual bathroom) and then snuggled into bed for a read before sleep.

Sunday 18th September 2011 – “Maybe holidays are about relaxing”

It wasn't a great night's sleep for Phil and both of us were disturbed around 3am when the guys next door left for their LA job and decided to leave their truck running outside our window for about 10 minutes. I must have got some sleep though as I had strange dreams. I got out of bed at 9.30am, leaving Phil snoozing, to go and investigate what the breakfast options were, as the room included breakfast. We could have toast and jam and tea and cereal, courtesy of the non-dairy creamer I had bought at Jimbo's Health Store last night. We didn't have to check out till midday so were in no particular rush, especially as we had a really short drive to our chosen Econolodge in Encinitas. Despite the lack of sleep both of us still felt quite relaxed and in good spirits, probably due to the fact that we knew what lay ahead in our next few days; a good room, warm weather and no moving around to unknown hotels. Phil was in quite a funny mood and even told me how his mornings toilet session had resulted in 'them all lining up and taking their turn' to go down the pan!! An unnecessary sharing of events but it did make me giggle when he very seriously told me.

As we had the luxury of time this morning, I wanted to go and check out a pet shop in Encinitas to see if I could get Kizzy and Kenai some treats to take back. We also knew that at some point soon, a branch of Native Foods was going to be opening up there and just on the off chance we wanted to check that it hadn't already and we would be missing out! Ironically, and without us knowing, it ended up being in the same mall as the pet store but sadly it was indeed not open yet. At least we would know where it was for the next time! We were told in the pet store, when we asked, that there was however another health style cafe a couple of blocks down the road called Naked Cafe. With our very light breakfast already a distant memory in our bellies, we headed there for a spot of lunch. It was okay but as usual, not a patch on Native Foods. However, it did fill us up, at least for now!

After lunch I got some more cash out and we decided, seeing as we were out this way, we would take a little trip over to Surfy Surfy's factory. We already knew that there weren't that many boards over there at present, as the Surfy Surfy shop had rung up to find out for us at the beginning of our trip, but it is still a nice place to visit and for me there was the added lure of seeing Moon Kitty, the resident cat who even has his own Facebook page. It was only after arriving there and finding it shut that we realised that we should have thought that one through a little more being that it was Sunday. It is easy to forget what day it is whilst on holiday and whilst surrounded by the world of normally 24-7.

As it was now mid afternoon, we decided to make the final drive to the Econolodge just in time to check in with Gavin, the owner. We were glad to be back here and told him of our experience at another Econolodge last night and that we would have stayed at his if there had been space. He told us that that particular branch wasn't very good and again proudly showed up his trophy for being the best one in this area. He also told us that, although he now recognised us from our last visit a couple of weeks back, he had expected us to be Indian as Gill is apparently a very common Indian name!

This time we had an upstairs room and it was as nice as last time. We instantly felt very relaxed and almost didn't get our sorry arses off of the bed and out again. The weather on the coast here was grey and much cooler than 5 miles inland. Apparently that is what happens here quite frequently in that inland it will be really really hot and sunny but on the coast it was like this. That was a little disappointing but at least it was warmer than further up north. We eventually went to check the surf but it was all too small. Determined to have a nice cosy evening in, we then headed over to Wholefoods to stock up on nice food. We found some Maui Coconut Porter beer that looked interesting but didn't know whether it would be vegan or not. As the staff at Wholefoods are normally super helpful, I decided it would do no harm to ask if they had a vegan beer list so went up to the customer service desk to ask. They didn't but the guy there said he would regardless find out for me and then find me wherever I was in the store. A little while later he did so with the good news that it was indeed vegan and that he added his wife absolutely loved it. I thanked him for his effort and headed back over to the beer section to grab some. We added a bottle of wine, taquitos, salads and some frozen Rice Dream bites to our basket before taking off 'home' for an early evening of relaxing. The beer was amazing but we hadn't totally thought our frozen dessert choice through as it turned out that the freezer we had imagined in our room was just that; imagination. That meant we had to finish the whole box of mini vegan choc ice bites in one go before they defrosted. It was a chore but somebody had to do it!! With the lovely food, the beer, the wine, listening to music and generally taking it easy, it was one of the most relaxing evenings we had spent. Not having to work out our next move or book further hotels added to the relaxation, although we did check to see whether we were missing out on any upcoming tour dates from the likes of the Mattson2, Ray Barbee, Tommy Guerrero or Shawn Lee. Unfortunately we didn't find any but at least we knew this time that we weren't missing out. With bellies full and relaxed, we turned in for a relatively early night.

Monday 19th September 2011 – “Forbidden Fruit”

Despite our relaxing evening and early night, both of us work up around 3am and couldn't sleep much for some reason so were feeling pretty knackered by morning. Work stuff had started to infiltrate our holiday minds perhaps?

Phil went to get us our bagel, banana, juice and tea breakfast at around 8.30am. It was a grey day again and there was coolness in the air. So much for coming down south for more heat! We took our time having breakfast and then Phil went to walk to check the surf whilst I washed my hair. The surf was smaller than yesterday so Phil wasn't going to bother going in. I suggested we go to the San Diego Botanical Gardens which is actually just down the road here in Encinitas. It was another thing I had had my eye on doing the last trip but hadn't had time to do.







The gardens are huge but we just about covered every bit of it and walked for hours. The best bit for me was the bamboo garden with over 110 different species of bamboo of all different sizes, shapes and colours. Bamboo is such an amazing and sustainable plant with so many uses in today's society. There was also a pond within the bamboo garden with huge frogs and turtles in it which kept me and my camera happy for quite some minutes. I also really enjoyed walking around the edible fruit garden but we really both had to resist picking all the different kinds of fruit to eat as we walked around as that was strictly, for obvious reason, forbidden. I nearly bought a T-shirt in the tiny gift store at the gardens which said on the front simply 'I dig plants' but they didn't have one small enough for me.



After hours of walking around and taking in all the wonders of the plant world, we were really tired. On the way back to Encinitas we stopped off at Lou's Records again to have another brief look as last time we had seen some Shawn Lee CDs and Phil might have been interested in getting one. Phil picked up a bargain one at just over \$4 and got rid of most of his loose change to boot. Not quite ready to return to the room yet, despite our tiredness, we drove along to look at Swami's surf spot and then Cardiff Beach just to see if there was any improvement in the surf conditions but no such luck. We wandered along to some shops in a small mall in Cardiff and saw an animal charity, or as they call them over there 'thrift', store. We only had a few minutes to look around before they closed but I found some really good fitting Prana trousers for \$4. Phil was really jealous as Prana are normally really expensive and hard to find and here they were in my size for a bargain price and my money went to a good cause. I paid for the trousers and the guy that served us noticed our accents. He said he had been to England and loved it but he had only been to London and Cornwall! When we told him we were from Cornwall he said that his wife was from Camborne and that he had had the most delicious pasty in Mevagissey! Small world!

We left but I mentioned to Phil that I wouldn't mind going back to look for more treasures before we left. We then had a brief look for the last time around the Patagonia store before heading back to Encinitas and a stroll down the high street, which we hadn't actually done at all. It was then soon 'Wholefoods O'clock' and our bellies were on the rumble for grub. We had another great feast of vegan pizza and spaghetti squash with Bolognese sauce which we decided to eat in the outside seated area whilst watching the world go by. We had already decided that we weren't going to have any alcohol tonight in the hope that we might sleep better if we didn't.

We headed back to our room for a cosy night in. It was still quite warm so we left the window open all evening whilst we listened to local radio on the netbook and checked our emails. We also made the decision that we would stay down in Encinitas Wednesday night and then drive up to the airport on Thursday morning rather than move closer in the meantime. We knew how long it would take and would leave plenty of time anyway before we had to check in at the airport so it seemed silly to spend time in an area we didn't necessarily want to be in and at a hotel we didn't know when we could make the most of enjoying a relaxing and comfortable extra day in Encinitas. It is only 100 miles and a generous 2 hour drive and the extra time we would allow could be used buying last minute treats at the massive Wholefood Market in LA and checking out the big book store next door to it. We would tell Gavin at reception tomorrow. With that decided we lazed around until bedtime. I had hoped to have Skyped my sister as it was my niece's birthday and we had loosely arranged to do so but they didn't appear to be on Skype. This was a shame because for once we were only 1 hour adrift from the Alaskan time zone rather than the usual 9 hours that sometimes made it tricky to coordinate from the UK.



Tuesday 20th September 2011 – "Inwardly Sunny"

We both slept better last night despite the noisy fridge kicking in every now and then. We woke up in time for me to grab a quick shower and then go and get us our bagel breakfast. It was my turn this morning. I saw Gavin and told him we had decided to stay on Wednesday night and he confirmed this was no problem. After breakfast we both walked the short distance to check the surf and it was small but okay. We watched for a while as dolphins were out there too messing around in the surf. Phil decided to go in for a surf so we went back to the hotel to grab his board and my camera. Phil was out for about 1 ½ hours and it was small and fun. The occasional dolphin swam close-by but unfortunately I didn't manage to get them in the same shot as Phil. I spent some time wandering the beach and taking various other photos as I went, mostly abstract shots of stuff lying around on the beach.



Back at the hotel I downloaded the photos whilst Phil took a shower and rinsed his wetsuit. Afterwards we decided to go looking for a couple of caches in the nearby Cotton Creek. It was a relatively short walk to get to them and both were easy finds. I was then in the mood for an iced chai tea latte so we cruised to Wholefoods to get one. Phil, obviously hungry from his surf, got some vegan pizza too. We drove down the road to Cardiff for me to return briefly to the charity shop for a proper look. Phil remained in the car chowing down on his pizza whilst I went in. It was really busy today. There was also a really funny little girl in there with her mum. At one point she was commenting to her mum about how her mum should treat herself to a new dress because she would look pretty in it and 'your butt would look good in that one'. Seeing as the little girl was only about 5 or 6 that had the whole store in stitches. I found an Edward Abbey book for \$1 that I had been thinking about buying new from the Patagonia store. I also found a San Francisco music CD for \$1 that was worth a punt and a baseball hat that had 'Vegan' on it also for \$1. Total price was \$5 with a donation so a bargain really!

After the brief revisit to the charity store we drove the short distance over the Cardiff lagoon and to the trail head to a hike that we had got the details of. The hike took us inland and under Freeway 5 for quite awhile alongside a lagoon. Inland about one mile it was sunny and hot. We saw squirrels, rabbits, large fish, lizards, cattle egret, large birds of prey, various other unidentified birds and weird bugs but no rattlesnakes or mountain lions as warned about by the signs on the trail head thank goodness! By the time we returned to the car we had been walking for over 2 hours. The coast was as grey as we had left it and we instantly missed the sunshine of inland.





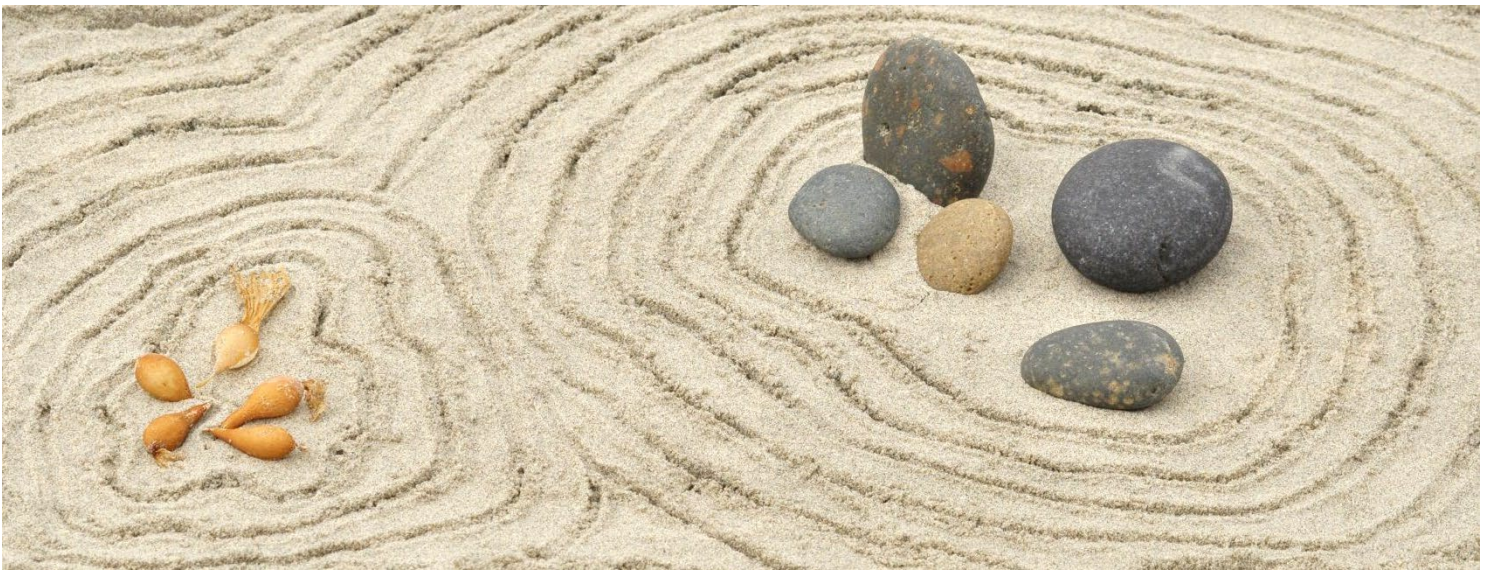
On the way back towards the hotel we had a quick look up the shopping street in Solana Beach and found an outdoor store that was still open. I picked up some useful free booklets about state parks whilst Phil tried on some Patagonia shoes. The size was however not right but I thought they were not very nice anyway and likened them to granddad shoes. Slightly further up the road we found a kind of weird market place in a large two storey building. It was mostly full of arty stuff and we probably would have spent longer looking round but they were just about closing up. It wasn't that an exciting a place that we would have been inspired to have returned though.

We were ready for our habitual Wholefoods visit at this point. We decided to take our food this evening and eat it outside whilst watching the world go by. I stuck to a simple collection of salads whilst Phil went for curry this evening. We drove back to the hotel via the back roads after stopping off briefly to take a look at Moonlight Beach but by this time it was too dark really to see anything. Back at the room, I logged the earlier caches, we checked our emails and I enjoyed the luxury of a bath. Relaxed and cleansed from the dusty hike today, I then got into bed and finished my book before then relaxing whilst unusually watching a spot of TV. It didn't last long before we were then retiring to bed for the night.

Wednesday 21st September 2011 – “Hanging Out and Hanging On”



Today was our last full day and it was another grey one but at least it was warm. We had both slept quite well. I did my back exercises first thing and found that my calves were aching after the sandy trail hike yesterday. Phil headed off to get breakfast as it was his turn. After our bagel breakfast we walked to check the surf and again it looked okay so Phil decided to make the most of it. I got a few shots of his waves but also got distracted again by a fair amount of stuff on the beach.



Back at the hotel I downloaded the photos whilst Phil showered. I was feeling quite lazy today and nearly remained on the bed but we decided to get going and make the most of our last day. We tried to find a cache about 200ft from the hotel to no avail. It was way too busy to be poking around in the bushes next to the road, even with the ruse of the bus stop right next to the location. It was quite frustrating to have one so close and not find it. We walked a bit up the road to a bookshop we hadn't explored yet. It had lots of erotica and art books but some 'normal' ones too. It was quite an unusual bookstore! Phil found a Tom Robbins book he hadn't read and so bought that. Afterwards we

dropped off briefly to the room then out again to Surfy Surfy surf shop to get tickets for a film we wanted to see tonight. They didn't have any left for the 7pm showing; only the 9.15pm one and we really didn't want to go that late. Summer, the lady in the shop, managed to ring up and organise getting some more tickets sent over so we waiting the 15 minutes or so it took for them to arrive.

We then had our first visit of the day to Wholefoods for a chai. I also wanted to drop off a Bookcrossing book that I had just finished reading last night. This book had been left in one of my caches in Crantock and I had registered it on Bookcrossing and then brought it with me to read. Now finished I wanted to pass it on, as is the way with Bookcrossing. Whilst we drank our chais I left it on a nearby table. Unfortunately, it didn't have the desired effect as everybody who approached the table thought that the table was taken and took off to another one. I left it there whilst we took a stroll up the main street in the hope that somebody would take it. We browsed a bookstore and an ecoshop and then strolled the other way a bit before we realised that time was pushing on quite a bit and we had stuff to do before heading back to town for a bite to eat before the film.

Back at the room we completed the on-line check in and got changed. We got back to Wholefoods around 6pm and again sat outside to eat. The book was still there, although we did see a guy sit down at the table. Before we knew it, it was time to get to the cinema for the film. There was a big queue outside but we had tickets so were able to jump ahead and go passed the ticket office. The film was about one surfer's journey to campaign against the Japanese dolphin slaughter. In the foyer they were selling raffle tickets to raise money for the campaign. We each had a free raffle ticket which came with the film tickets but we both decided to buy more to support it. The prizes were pretty cool too including Patagonia gear.

The cinema was really nice with a kind of Mexican influenced interior. There were two guys playing music on the stage when we went in; one on guitar and the other one playing a didgeridoo. Unfortunately the sound system wasn't that good but it was still nice to hear some live music. We got seats in the middle back and settled in; having to move just once when a big guy then sat directly in front of me. The guy who was involved in the film, Dave Rastovitch (Rasta), was there and lots of people were talking to him, including Summer from Surfy Surfy. The raffle preceded the film but today wasn't our lucky day. Everybody cheered however when a guy on crutches won a skateboard.

The film started and initially the crowd was quite noisy but it did settle down eventually. It was a good film although both of us thought there was a lot more in it about the guy than the cause where we weren't expecting but we were still both pleased we went to see it and support it. Anything that raises the awareness of such horrors deserves support. We think it might have been the premiere of the film but we weren't entirely sure of that.

We had left the car in the Wholefoods market probably longer than we should have done and so, upon returning to it, we were both relieved all was well. During the film we had both had visions of getting back to find it having been towed away. Back at the hotel we set about doing a final pack up of our stuff. Phil packed up and full protected his surfboard with the saved cardboard from a Wholefood pizza box and the bubble wrap I had bought over from home in my rucksack. I had come over with only half my rucksack filled, knowing that that meant more room to take stuff back home with me so it was a perfect space for bubble wrap for protecting the pre-planned purchase of the returning surfboard. I discovered that I actually had more spare space that I thought I did which meant that I could pack it with further LA Wholefood treats tomorrow if I wanted to!

After packing I had a quick email check and also looked up what the weather was like in the UK. It actually didn't look too bad at all with some good warm weather predicted for our return. I also took a look at the Crantock webcam. It was funny looking at such a familiar view whilst 5000 miles from home. As long as volcanoes didn't strike this time, we would be back there pretty soon. I decided however to Face book message H teasing her that we had been delayed again due to the Icelandic volcano and problems with the check in computers. Teasing over, I did a quick journal catch up as I was way behind and also checked the route for tomorrows drive before having a quick read and then turning in for our final night in California.

Thursday 22nd September 2011 – “Back to LAX Land”

Phil didn't sleep very well but I somehow managed to sleep okay. On pulling back the curtains we discovered that today, the day we were leaving, it was typically sunny for the first time in days. We totally finished our packing and had our usual breakfast before checking out and saying goodbye to Gavin and setting up the freeway north at 9.20am. Phil drove and I navigated today. The journey was meant to take approximately 1 hour and 43 minutes but we had allowed a lot more than that as we had discovered that the freeway was normally extremely busy and slow. Today however it was really free flowing. The journey was not without its dramas though in that the fuel light came on when the fuel gauge still showed one bar. We had about 15 miles to go and wanted to deliver the car back with as much of an empty tank as possible as we had prepaid for the fuel with the car company. We would no doubt have easily made it back on the remaining fuel but for the sake of bunging in \$5's worth of fuel it wasn't worth the risk or the effect on our peace of mind so we pulled off the 405 to refuel. Back on the freeway and only a few miles later we took at easy route to the Plaza El Segundo, the shopping mall where the big LA Wholefoods was. This had been a familiar haunt for us last time whilst stuck in LA trying to reschedule our volcano affected

flight with the ensuing waiting around near the airport. It was also where we started our journey this time around, dropping in to here to pick up food on our initial journey down south. We sat outside in the blazing sun, soaking up the last few warm rays we would probably feel for a while, and enjoyed our favourite drink of ice chai tea latte. With time on our hands now, and the car rental returns and airport only minutes away, we ambled along to the nearby Borders bookstore only to find it was now closed down for some kind of remodelling. I had spotted a pet store on the way thought so took the opportunity to explore that briefly and also look for additional treats for the hounds at home. Amongst the rows and rows of treats, food, collars, toys and dressing up costumes (and I saw quite a few women perusing these racks choosing costumes!), I found a couple of carrot treats; one large for Kizzy and one small for Kenai. I was tempted by a Halloween pumpkin costume for Kenai but wasn't into making her look extremely silly and she even struggles with wearing her fairly conventional and practical snow booties.

We returned to Wholefoods at this point for a final and proper look around this huge store but surprisingly we didn't really buy much additional things except for a couple of big tubes of organic moisturiser for \$10 that would normally cost about £10 for just one so that was a bargain. We then ate lunch and sat outside in the sun until it was time to get going and take the car back to the car rental depot.

We arrived at the depot just after 2pm and were directed into the hustle and bustle of the return lanes to park up. When I say hustle I should really say hassle as they were keen for you to get out as soon as possible. Some guy thrust a receipt in my hand whilst another offered to take our bags and personally drive us to the airport and started to pick up our luggage to do so. We told everyone to back off as we wanted to get ourselves together, check the car, makes sure we had everything and also check the receipt so we declined the lift. Only after we were sure we had everything, we walked to the main building to check the really confusing receipt. We thought they had charged us for mileage but they hadn't and it appeared it was in order as much as we could understand. We noted that we had driven a total of 2200 miles on this trip. Reasonably satisfied we didn't have to dispute our final bill; we went outside and boarded the shuttle bus. Thankfully it didn't seem to be a problem with the surfboard. We had worried about this a little bit as previous shuttle buses had been hit or miss whether they would let you take it onboard. Once seated and driving towards the airport I couldn't find the bottle of water we had recently purchased and imagined I had left it on the sidewalk on boarding the bus. However, once at our airport terminal and grabbing our luggage, I found I had just dumped it next to my bag on the luggage rack.

Having checked in on-line last night, it was a simple and easy baggage drop at the Virgin desk, or perhaps it just seemed easy after the complications of our volcanic departure on the last trip. We sat and drank the last bit of the bottle of water before moving through the various bits of security. There is a crazy situation, like most airports these days where you can't take water through the security checks but you can then go and buy it near the boarding gate and take that on the airplane. A lady in the queue next to us got talking to us. She was from Maui and seemed of a nice but slightly crazy disposition. She was asking us lots of questions about the security process as it seemed she hadn't been here before and then told us about her home a bit. It was nice to talk with her for a while but we were glad that she was going on another flight as it might have been a little tiring after a while.

The gate was really busy so we found a quiet spot in another gate to sit, read and relax before we started boarding. After about 30 minutes or so I suddenly heard an announcement calling me to the boarding gate by name. Both of us looked at each other in horror. Surely our return trip this time couldn't go wrong this time? We grabbed our bags and practically sprinted to the desk at the gate. It turned out that they were merely offering us a better choice of seats which was really nice of them as we would have been stuck right in the middle and now at least we wouldn't have to disturb anyone if we wanted to leave our seats.

Soon we were boarding for our 10 hour return flight. Once we found our seats and settled in we were so relieved that we had been moved as, although the lady sat immediately next to us was very nice, there was another really large, but pleasant, gentlemen next to her and she clearly had a little less space on that side. We felt quite sorry for her having to squeeze up and also ask him to move whenever she needed the toilet. It turned out it could have been even worse without a move of seats because the lady next to me had, later on in the journey thankfully, developed a severe case of the constant sniffs. I can only imagine how worse our journey would have been sandwiched between the fat man and the sniffer with no easy escape!!

Finally we were touching down and, after picking up our bags and clearing customs without incident, we were heading for the shuttle train to Terminal 2 where mum and dad would pick us up. They had rung to say they were delayed due to an accident on the M25 but regardless, we all arrived pretty much at the same time and loaded our luggage into the car for our final journey of the day.

We would have one day of rest in Kent on Saturday before we then take our final journey home to Cornwall on Sunday. Work and routine was pulling us back and away from the free living, sights, tastes and smells of California.....until the next time we would return.

