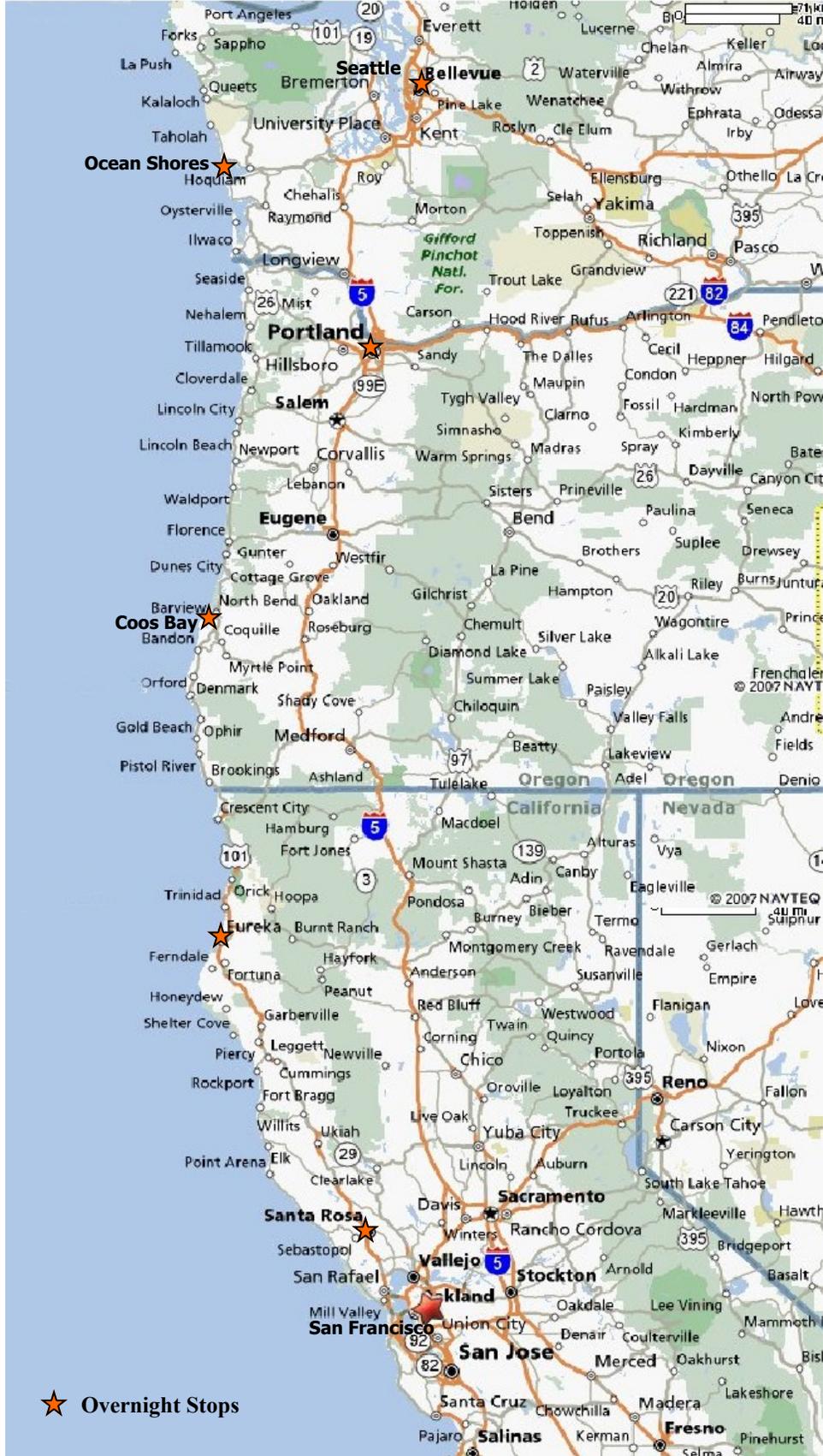


Pacific Coastal Explorer

9-18th August 2007.



Acknowledgements

Pictures with an adjacent number are mine.

Those without a number have been copied from other sources.

Day 1 ~ Thursday, 9th August

As usual we had to haul Windsor from behind the bed, yowling.

It rained over night, again, so not too much to water.

John is here, so lets go.

"Why don't you stop in at Staples and find a note book. Just in case the ride is too bumpy for your hand held."

Jan waits on the bus.

A lady asks where to sit. Apparently she gets car sick. Good, she sits two seats in front of us.

It is 9:30 am, we roll; Laura gives us a nice welcome.

It is cloudy dull and starting to rain.

"Jan, this is not the time to ask if I locked the front door."

We pass a field with rows of hay completely sealed in white plastic. "That's the first time I have seen vacuum packed grass since we were in New Zealand."

We are pulling into O'Hare. The road is lined with beautiful flowers in huge tubs. Baskets hang from the street lamps.

Jeff Beile, our tour guide from Tri-State Travel, reached O'Hare ahead of us to scope out our check-in arrangements. Our group waits in line for check in, along with the contingent from Decatur. There are 51 in our combined party.

"Next please."

We step up to the counter. We have 'E-tickets' and pre-assigned seats.

We learn we have a window and middle seat and can not switch to an aisle.

"Wait, I can do that." We get a window and aisle on the side with two seats. Nice!

A lady police officer taps Jan on the arm and admires her denim jacket.

Jeff helps load our luggage at the X-ray screen.

Our wait at Security is short and relatively painless. One of the staff chats. "Are you going to Alcatraz?"

This is strange. People are trying to be nice. We might even enjoy the flight.

With an hour and a half to wait before check in, there is ample time for lunch. The food courts have been enlarged and the selection much improved.

Jan announces, "I just want a McDonalds hamburger."

We find a table where she waits guarding our carry on. I order two hamburgers which are inexpensive but small. I should have ordered a Whopper.

We find our gate. Jeff comes to chat and check on us. We exchange life histories.

As usual I can not connect to the 'Free Wi-Fi network.' It seems to expect a password. Oh well, it is not important.

"Jan, our seats are row seven, do you think we got upgraded to first class?"

It turns out we are one row behind with a bulkhead separating us. Now I usually don't care to face a bulkhead, but we have ample leg room.

"Would you like to purchase a chicken wrap?" I stare at the example in the flight attendants hand. It looks like grass in a cardboard tube and decline. I will save myself for the cinnamon streusel I purchased, and for now the gin and tonic is much better.

Two and a half hours into the flight. The clouds have broken up into puffy Cirrocumulus. The sun is bright and details on the ground clear, even from 32,000ft. The land is rugged, arid and mountainous. We are about 100mi south of the Great Salt Lake in Utah. Below us is a white band marking another salt lake. Round green circles mark spots of irrigation.

Hooray, our flight arrives on time. From our seat of advantage, we are the first of our group off the plane. I position myself strategically at the carousel, but two baggage handlers beat me to it. We confirm these are our bags and join the rest of the party on the bus, where we are introduced to our driver Steve Madison. Naturally at 5:00pm, rush hour traffic is heavy and no doubt lasts several hours.

Check in at the Hilton is smooth, just find the envelope with our name. As usual our luggage is slow to reach our room. Although it was warm when we landed, the temperature has dropped and we need jackets.

"Jan, I'm going for our bags."

The line for the cable car is long. It is interesting to watch the cars turn around. The car slides on to a turn table. Two men push it around then roll the car off onto the tracks. We wait 45min and are at the head of the line. We have watched the rush and scramble for prime seats or standing position. "Follow me Jan." Good, I am just where I wanted to be. A few other people made similar choices. "Get off." Shouts one of the crew. "This car has no brakes and is not carrying passengers." The car immediately starts moving, presumably for repairs. I jump off. We have better luck with the next car and I take some video on route to Union Square.

We walk around but it is 7:30pm and don't want to look in shops like Macys. Also we don't want to wait another 45min for a return trip. I spot four police officers chatting and stand quietly until one notices me.

"How can we find public transport, other than the cable car, back to Pier 39?"

One of them turns around and cheerfully asks "Where are you from? I don't think you are Irish, and probably not a New Zealander."

So in the spirit of having fun I reply "I'm an American citizen." Which was not what he expected to hear.

"No, I mean your voice."

So I confess I am from London.

The lady cop is grinning at our verbal exchange. "Follow me I will show you. The bus leaves over there, you need the F-line."

We join a few other hardy souls at the bus stop. These are electric trolleys. Every conceivable number arrives, but not an F. It is cold. The folks in front leave.

After thirty minutes I announce. "Jan, if the next one is not an F-line, we get a cab."

Guess what, here comes an F.

The price is right. Just \$0.50ea for seniors like us. We grab two seats marked for seniors or the infirm.

"No we could not have walked back."

The car is packed with people standing but I am both infirm and a senior!

We debate whether to get off at Pier 39 or Fisherman's Wharf and opt for the first.

The wharf is brightly lit, gaudy and noisy. When last we were here we ate at one of the restaurants.

We make a detour to look at the Sea Lions which have taken over the marina. No boats moor there now. Noisy, fat, funny creatures.

At the far end of the pier we think we recognize the restaurant. "Let's try it."

Neptune's Palace seems familiar. Anyway the meal is excellent.

We follow the board walk but can't see the Hilton. A bellhop at another hotel tells us it is just round the corner.

Goodnight!



1. Cable Car.



2. Pushing the Turn Table.



3a. Uphill.



3c. Sea Lions on Pier 39.

Day 2 ~ Friday, 10th August

Chris Cavalier, a walk-on tour guide, greets us as we depart for our tour of San Francisco.

There are 43 named hills in the city. The warmest months are September & October.

We cross Lombard Street. To our right, the upper section is known as the 'crookedest street in the world'.

San Francisco, like most cities, has its ethnic neighborhoods. Passing through the Italian section we enter Washington Square with its statue of Ben Franklin. Here several people stand posed, practicing the Chinese art of Ti Chi.

Moving on. To our left is the Quoit Tower. We enter China Town with colorful store fronts, bustling with shoppers. The Chinese shop for fresh food daily. Piles of fruit and vegetables. Pekin duck and other meats hang in store windows. A short tunnel takes us under Knob Hill into Union Square.

The first cable car was invented in 1873 after a horse drawn carriage slid down a hill. There has to be a better way... At the peak there were 19 lines, but only 3 remain.

San Francisco experienced a gold rush in 1848 and increased in size by 35,000 people in just a few months, mostly to supply the miners.

In Union Square stands a statue of Alma Spreckels wife of Adolph who amassed a fortune controlling C&H sugar. In her time apparently quite a beauty.

San Francisco is 47sq mi with 800k people. Tourism, Banking & Bio-technology are the major industries. The 1906 earthquake and ensuing fire devastated the city.

Our coach driver is doing an incredible job navigating the steep hills and impossible corners, climbing Grant St to pass Grace Catholic Church modeled after Notre Dame.

An 800sq ft condo sells for \$850,000. A studio rents for \$1,400/mo, a one bedroom apartment \$1,900. Most people rent.

The architecture is beautiful. Homes tall, narrow, mostly three floors. The upper two have a protruding bay window. Many are painted in two or three bright colors. The best are known as *Painted Ladies* and date from 1890. A three color paint job costs \$30,000. One sold for \$4m with taxes of \$65k.

Shops have ornate, painted woodwork around the door and window frames. Above the door and window a large, gaudy name. Many have a double entendre.

City Hall façade has black and gilt ornate railings.

Into Opera Plaza and Alamo Square.

The brilliant red flowered trees with large shiny leaves are Bottle Brush.

On steep hills parked cars must turn their wheels into the curb.

The Transamerica Building, a tall spire is the highest in the City.

We drive along the Castro and up Market to Twin Peaks. At 900ft a high overlook topped by Sutro Tower for communications. A band of fog appears to slice it in half. A pair of Red Hawks buzz by.

The view looks down on the Bay. Oakland Bridge and Alcatraz can be seen clearly. Golden Gate is trying to hide in fog.

Back to Haight Ashbury then Golden Gate Park, built on sand dunes. An ambitious 1870's project by John McLaren.

The glass house is modeled after the one at Kew Gardens, though smaller. Badly damaged in a storm, but now re-furbished.

The Rose Garden is in bloom. I don't understand the purpose of the huge 'Purple Head', a statue, if you can call it that. Buried to its nose in the grass. The Bison have been moved to a temporary small enclosure. Queen Wilhelmina's Garden is showing off the most enormous lupins and banks of impatiens. A windmill anchors one corner.

The Russian Orthodox Church is resplendent with gold domes. The Presidio was a WWII military camp adjacent to the Golden Gate Bridge, but is now given over to commercial ventures like the Letterman Digital Arts Center and high end housing.

We stop at the south end of the Golden Gate for photos. The bridge, completed in 1937, is nearly 1 1/2mi long suspended 220ft above the water. A statue of the designer, Joseph Strauss stares down at us. In the middle of the Bay, Angel Island and Alcatraz are clearly visible. The latter closed as a prison in 1963, too expensive to maintain. Water temperature in the Bay is 50°F which explains why prisoners could not escape by swimming. Only two people were ever unaccounted for.

Hurrying back to the coach I trip on the sidewalk. "Yes thank you, I'm OK but my pride is not."

Much of the land around the Bay, like the Marina district, is unstable fill which liquefies in an earthquake. The best properties are built on bed rock as in Pacific Heights.

Back down Van Ness and lunch at the Oriental Pearl. The chop sticks disappear and are replaced by forks.

After crossing the Golden Gate Bridge, we stop at a scenic spot for group pictures, then head north into Marin County on Hwy 101, the Redwood Highway.

Past the floating homes of Sausalito and Lucky Drive which leads to San Quentin Prison.

The yellow grass gives California its name of 'The Golden State' and contrasts with the dark green trees dotting the hillsides. Crossing into Sonoma a sign reads 'Cash for grass.'

Thirteen miles from Santa Rosa we see the first vast vineyard.

Traffic is bumper to bumper. It is the winos leaving town for the weekend, heading into the wine producing valleys of Sonoma and Napa.

Tonight we stay at the Santa Rosa Hilton. At 6:45pm the coach departs for dinner at the Sassafras Restaurant. We are seated in a large room with long tables. Dinner includes a glass of wine. We both choose creamy potato soup, beef tips, which resemble London Broil, and desert. Superb.



4a. Sutro Tower.

10. Little Boxes.



4. View from Twin Peaks.



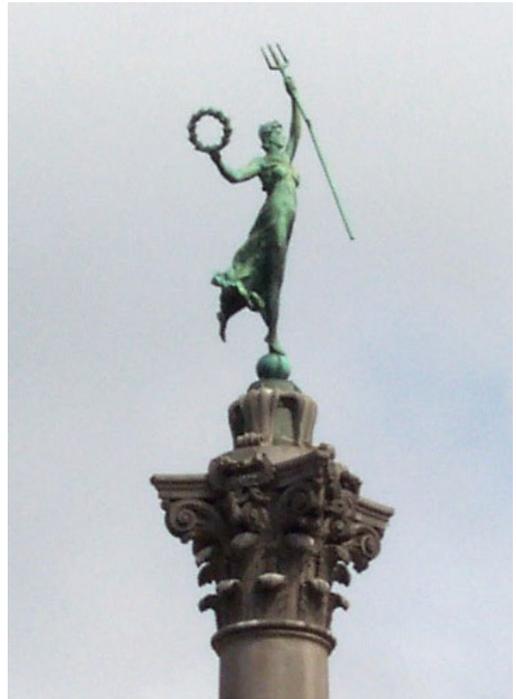
7. See the Oakland Bay Bridge.



34a. Painted Ladies.



Bottle Brush.



Alma Spreckels posed for this statue atop the Dewey Monument in Union Square.



13. Queen Wilhelmina's Gardens.



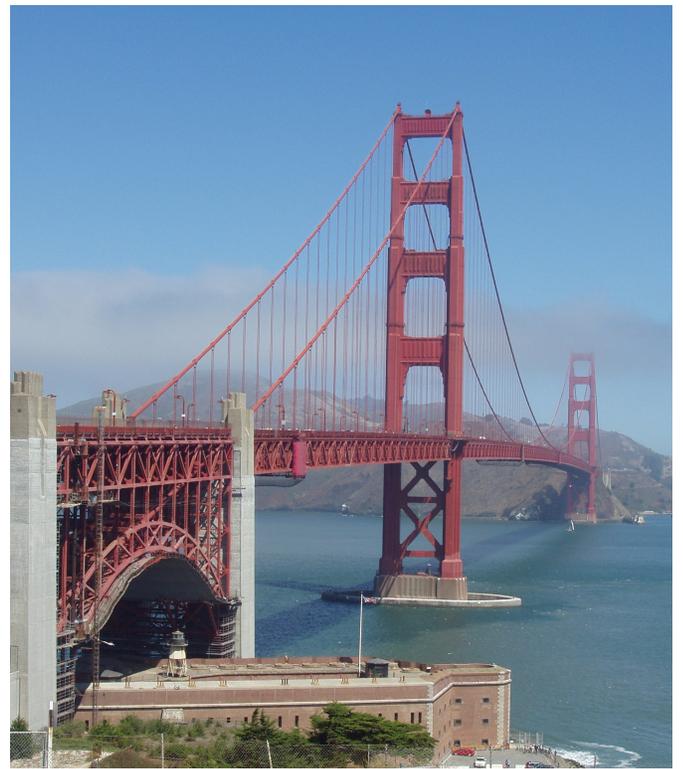
The Conservatory, Golden Gate Park.



19. Lupines.



15. Windmill.



23~24. Golden Gate Bridge from the Park.



26. Alcatraz.



33. Turn your toes in.



27. Oriental Pearl.



34. China Town.



30. Transamerica Building.



33a. Modern Home.



32. Let's go shopping.



Purple Head. The Dreamer, by Pepe Ozan, is a temporary exhibit.



38. The Other Side.



416. The golden grass gives California its name, the *Golden State*.

Day 3 ~ Saturday, 11th August.

It is bright and clear, though a little cool walking to breakfast..

The Bell Hops fail to show, so Steve & Jeff sling luggage. We roll.

Vineyards in the valley bottom and foothills. Here is the home of Asti Spumante by Italian-Swiss Colony. We rise through grass covered hills into trees and transition from vineyards to orchards to lumber.

A short stop at Willits, gateway to the Redwoods. The forest is dense. It is like driving through a tunnel. Jeff tells us lumber products are not the only industry. "Illegal agricultural products are an important revenue producer."

Redwoods grow 250-350ft high and are taller than Sequoia but not as massive. The Grandfather Tree is about 1800 years old and 265ft tall. At a stall live burls sit on damp cloth and sprout baby Redwoods. A burl is a little knot of immature cells which form on the trunk.

The shopping ladies do not heard well and we are late departing.

We follow the twisting Eel River.

We hope someone has just forgotten to change the sign which reads "Redwoods closed for the season." Through Richardson Grove to Garberville for lunch at the *House of B.*

Down the Avenue of Giants to Humboldt Redwood State Park. The redwoods grow in a band 450x40 miles parallel to the coast. Heavy rain helps them absorb nutrients. High levels of tannin slows their growth. The remaining 'Old growth stand' contains trees 1500-2000 years old. Because of their height and the filtered light, Redwoods are growing in three climatic zones. A cool base and hot top. There are no birds to be seen. They are all at the 300ft level. Squirrels do not use Redwoods, which are too tall and dangerous to nest in. Whilst they are present, they use smaller trees which are sparse.

In Founders grove lies the Dyersville Giant, which, at 370ft, was the tallest known Redwood until it fell in 1991. *Windthrow* (the blowing over of trees) is the leading cause of Coast Redwood death. Several trees, recently found near Eureka, are contenders for the record.

The nature trail is a 20min walk. The paths covered in places with decaying wood. Nothing can be moved or removed. The forest is cool, dark and apart from the Japanese tourists, quiet. Huge trees lie where they fell. Many 10ft in diameter. Ferns are the only undergrowth.

We pause at the Visitor Center in Pioneer Grove.

At the ocean the sun disappears as if at the flick of a light switch. The temperature drops. The mist rolls in.

Eureka is located on Humboldt Bay. The tide is out. There does not appear to be any beach. Jan spots a sign for a board walk, but there is none in sight.

The Red Lion is parallel to the shore and perhaps two blocks away. From our room, which is very nice, we have an excellent view of an Auto repair shop.

Yes, we are hungry again. The Sizzler across the street looks inviting, but turns out to be all buffet. Back to the Red Lion. They too have a buffet set up, but that is for tomorrows Sunday brunch. We claim a booth and wait, then wait some more. "Sorry, we are not usually this busy." Guess the front desk forgot to tell the restaurant a coach was coming to town.

These are the largest pork ribs I have ever eaten. The bones are fatter than my thumb and at least 6in long. Dino-pig maybe. Still, the meat is good.

I find my first WiFi connection.



46.



50.



48. Willits, Grandfather Tree, 1800 years old.



55. Redwoods at Willits.



57. Redwood Carving.



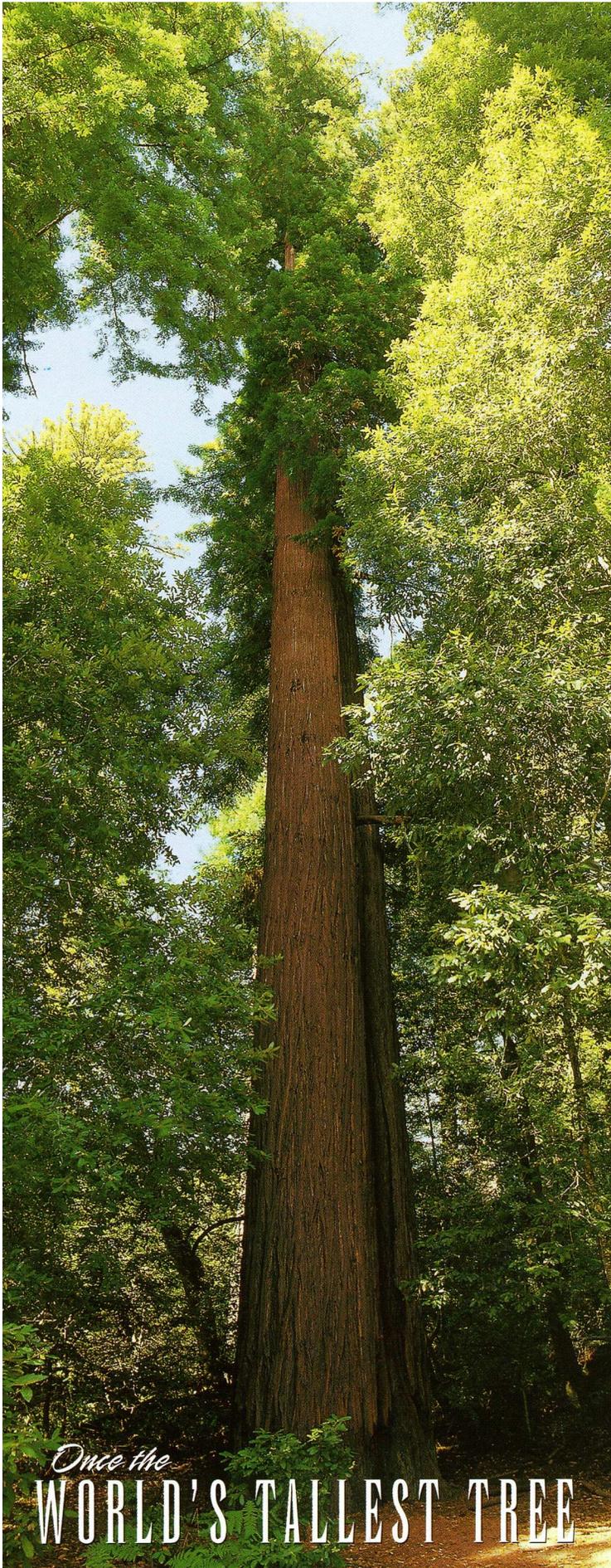
40.



45.



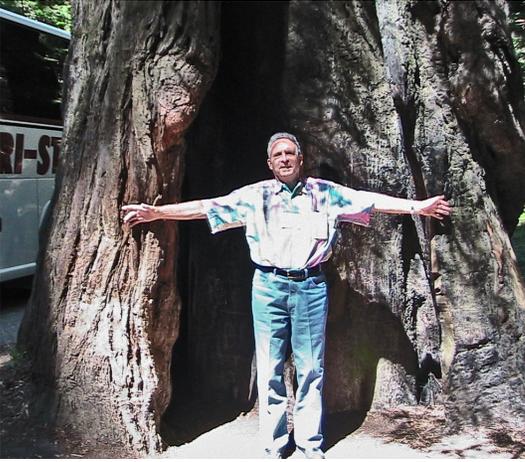
51. Only five minutes more...



426. Jeff Expounds.



429. Jan looks slim.



432. Martin boasts.

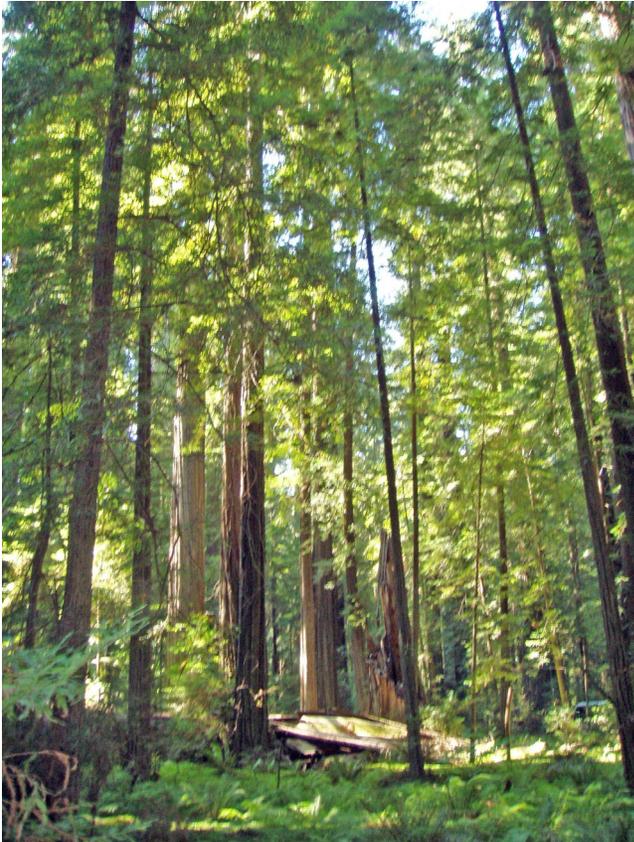
There is some disagreement about which tree was or is the worlds tallest. Several new contenders have been found near Eureka.



65. Yes, they are tall.



62. Founders Grove.



63. A quiet place.



61. Me big.

Day 4 ~ Sunday, 12th August.

At 7:30am this is our earliest departure. Goodbye Red Lion. Once more it is bright and sunny with just a thin strip of mist above the horizon. The tide is out, again. The winding coast road, Rt. 101, has only one lane in each direction.

The sun is still low. The bottom branches are in shadow. The tree tops catch full sun and glow like torches.

In a field to our left are a dozen Elk, Steve slows, then incredibly three young males trot onto the road in front of us. We follow at a distance. The leader heads for the ditch, turns and butts antlers with his 'brother'. They are no more than 20ft from us. Just practicing for rutting to come. Jeff claims to have called ahead to arrange for the performance.

Winding among fir trees we cross the Klamath River, past the Yurok Indian Reservation. Below and to our right wispy clouds cross the valley.

We descend to the Pacific, then climb to follow a cliff road ducking in and out of mist.

A turn inland through more Redwoods. The filtered sun flickers in the windows.

Crescent City, population 8,000, has a fishing fleet. We follow the Smith River to Brookings. In this area are 500 acres of Easter Lilies which supplies 90% of the US. Late bloomers spot the fields white, like patches of snow.

Oregon has 300mi of public beach. No part of the shore is privately owned. We cross Thomas Creek the highest bridge in Oregon, 345ft, and descend in fog to Meyers Beach hoping to see the tall rocks known as Sea Stacks. But they hide from us.

At Agnes we board a Rogue River Jet Boat powered by three Chrysler engines. Two ladies call out "No wheelies." Some of us mutter "Kill joys!" Travis, our driver, is a story teller. He claims the round wind deflectors on the power lines crossing the river are to drop salt into the Rogue, to acclimate migratory salmon to fresh water.

The Rogue varies in depth from a few inches to 50ft at the deepest point.

The boat easily seats all 51 of us. Cast off. It is cool so we are glad of the jackets we were given. We move slowly. The channel is wide. Dozens of small fishing boats surround us. Two or three people to a boat. It is the salmon run.

We pick up speed. The boat rises from the water. Now we could run in as little as 6-8". The river narrows to a gorge.

Travis points out the wildlife. There are 37 Osprey Nests in this section of the river.

A Herron lifts a delicate leg at waters edge. A pair of Turkey Buzzards circle. No, we are not for lunch. Berganza ducks keep a rock warm. An immature Bald Eagle guards his nest. Sturgeon can reach 7ft. There's a grove of Myrtle.

Frequent stops extend the time to reach Lucas Lodge. The path from the landing to the meadow is steep. A sign reads "Walk across the meadow to the lodge." The only problem is, three sprinklers are watering it. I am in the lead and choose an S shaped route.

It looks like we are approaching the back of the building. No one in sight. Its a 1920's farmhouse. We circle. Guess that's the front door. Not very impressive.

"Please go to the back terrace."

Long wooden tables are laid out with plates and cutlery under shade trees. Above them nets to keep leaves off. Deep fried chicken, beans and corn are served family style. The food is good and plentiful. We adjourn to a covered porch for desert. Ice cream with home made raspberry preserves.

Some of the more infirm hitch a ride in a four wheel drive back to the dock. Us hearty ones stride.

Travis has more tricks for us. We stop quietly below the tree with the young eagle. He throws a dead fish into the river. The eagle circles then swoops to cease it.

As we pass under the bay bridge and again pick our way between the fishermen, a harbor seal pokes his head up in greeting.

Jeff was a teacher before he switched to travel. He hands out test sheets. 25 questions related to the US, true or false... We score 16.

On route to Coos Bay, a lumber town, we follow the rugged coast.

At the Red Lion I order drinks to take to our room.

"No sir, you may not carry drinks in Oregon, but we can have an attractive young lady accompany you." I think I had better decline.

WiFi internet access is good.

"Jan, let's go to the bar."

Here the Decatur crowd is seated at a long table. One announces "Don't order the hot dogs, they are so large." But too late, three ladies at another table have already ordered. The foot-longs immediately intimidate them. Divided, they are passed around the room.

The tap ale is equally impressive. A pint and a half I would guess. It takes forever to get our soup and sandwich. It seems everyone is short staffed. One of the patrons starts waiting.



443. Elk practicing for rutting.



445.



448. Sea Stacks.



And, on a fine day.



The Jet Boat is huge and holds all 51 of us.

89.





86. Timid deer.

81. Boulder.

75. Ducking spray.





88. After lunch.



68. Enter the Rogue.



92.



83.

Day 5 ~ Monday, 13th August.

Oregon Dunes National Seashore is 40mi long. The tide is out, again!

The bright low morning sun casts long shadows. Ponds are filled with plants similar to Water Hyacinth.

Florence is a popular retirement town but I could not handle 80in rain a year even if there is no snow.

The Sea Lion Caves were discovered in 1880. Steller Sea Lions come here in huge numbers to winter over and calve. The coach parks across the street which we cross en masse.

The lookout provides a good photograph of Heceta Head lighthouse perched on the cliff. It is a long steep walk with 60 steps to the elevator installed in 1961, we descend 200ft to a dark platform overlooking the huge cave.

"Where are the Sea Lions?"

"Out for lunch!"

I think I see two. Disappointing.

Cape Perpetua at 800ft, is the highest point on the Oregon Coast, then down to follow a low coastal road. Here there are lots of vacation homes, sandy beach, and a sign which reads "Leaving Tsunami Hazard Zone."

The Alsea Bridge is quite ornate. It is 11:20am. Time for lunch at the House of Rogue in Newport. Despite a cool breeze, we sit comfortably on the patio at a wooden table, protected by a glass wall and colorful beer brolly.

"I am sorry, we are out of Youngs English bitter." So I order a Brutal Ale.

The waterfront is mostly industrial. Not too many restaurants by the sea. Opposite is a fish packing plant.

The restrooms are labeled *Barleys & Hops*, since I don't know which I am, I wait for a lady to exit.

Back on the bus, we have to choose tomorrows lunch at Timberline Lodge. So much food planning. We should plan to slim!

At Lincoln City we turn east on winding, tree lined Hwy 18. A Police Car emerges up Murphy Hill, scoots in front of us and turns around on the side. Don't know what that show was about. Steve does not flinch, after all, he's traveling the speed limit.

I know logging is a serious financial business, but I hate to see clear cut hillsides.

So many Casinos. This one is Spirit Mountain. So many Salem's, this one 30mi.

At Yamhill River crossing is a huge crane with logs in a ring around it as if bowling.

We reach Bellevue with its flat fields of yellow straw and huge piles of hay stacked like boxes.

When land was being registered, a soldier miss-heard the name *Yamhill* which is actually derived from an Indian name. The Yamhill Valley Vineyard was a turkey farm, but now produces grapes and dairy products. There is no money in turkeys.

Sandy, the office manager, gives us an introduction. The farm is 150 acres, of which 100 acres are producing grapes. It is family owned. Only ten people work there, three full time. When the grapes are being harvested, 40-50 people work six hour days.

The season begins in March when the vines are pruned to leave just two stems of last years growth. A little water is provided, but not too much. The vines must find there own water and put down roots thirty feet deep. Buds form in April and now, two thirds of the growing season is over. They begin picking grapes the first week of October, and only in the morning. All the equipment must be sanitized. The afternoon is devoted to pressing. Sandy tells us the work is not hard, but is labor intensive.

No pesticides are used although they do spray detergents and practice canopy management.

They have a distributor in Downers Grove and ship all over the world.

A new vineyard takes three years to produce the first grapes and should continue to be productive for 30 years. The yield is 2-2½ ton/acre.

If the demand changes, the variety can be changed by grafting on a new one.

Lavender is grown between the vines as a cash crop, then plowed under to provide nutrients.

Now we enjoy a wine tasting and purchase a bottle of Riesling to enjoy in the hotel.

Rt. 99 brings us to Minville with its beautiful hanging baskets and a glimpse of 11,000 ft Mt. Hood to our right.

At 5:00pm it is 84°F. Here is the cheapest gas at \$2.69. We pass through little towns like Newberg and Sherwood and cross the Willamette River descending into Portland.

The Lloyds Center Towers rise in the city center. Portland is a popular city to move to. A cable car crosses above the road, providing transportation from a parking lot to the hospital high on a hill above.

The staff at the Radisson promise prompt delivery of our luggage, but it does not arrive. We leave for supper at the Chart House in travel attire. Situated high on a hill, we have a fine view of the city at dusk.

Our bottle of wine is good.



96. Oregon Dunes National Sea Shore.



461. Heceta Head Lighthouse.



Sea Lion Caves.





467. Yamhill Valley Vineyard.



469.



100. I'll take one of those.



101. Tasting.



102. Cellars.



103. Barrels.

Day 6 ~ Tuesday, 14th August.

We open the drapes for a nice view of a duck pond but at least there are no geese!

Taking a residential route, we join the rush hour traffic into Metropolitan Portland, a city of 2 million people. Portland is the largest exporter of wheat. We cross the Columbia River, on a floating bridge, to the International Test Rose Gardens in Washington Park. Here there are four acres with 6,800 rose bushes.

I think Steve has made a wrong turn. At the top of a hill he stops, backs up and turns around. Strange. But no, the exit can only be negotiated by a coach coming down hill.

The gardens are spectacular and maintained largely by volunteers. I watch how to prune roses. The perfume is intense. Now is the peak bloom.

We are too early for the Japanese Garden, which does not open until 10:00am.

"Where is your wife?" asks Jeff of the man behind.

"I left her in the Japanese Garden."

Evidently they sneaked in early.

A cell phone call summons her back to the coach.

As we leave Portland, a store proclaims its name, "Fairly Honest Bills."

At Gresham, where we start the Mt. Hood loop, the first pioneers erected a toll booth in the wilderness, in the 1800's to pay for services.

The road is carved into the mountain side. A sign proclaims "Snow Zone, chain up area ahead." The trees stop abruptly.

Building Timberline Lodge was a Roosevelt WPA (Works Progress Administration) project of the 1930's. Using hand carved wood throughout, European artisans taught American laborers.

Here, on Mt. Hood, is the only place in North America where one can ski year round. Looking up at the mountain top, several thousand feet above, most of the ground is bare except for a patch of snow. The scale is deceiving. Those tiny dots are people skiing. To our left, a chair lift snakes into the distance.

We lunch at the lodge in the bright and airy Mt. Hood room.

Leaving Mt. Hood we follow a steep, winding forested road to Drapers Fruit Stand. Most of our party buy fruit for supper and later proclaim its excellence.

The Hood river joins the Columbia. In the distance is Mt. Adams. This is reputedly the capital of windsurfing, hosting international competitions. It is brisk. In the distance several surfers flaunt their skills.

58 miles from Portland we enter the Columbia River Gorge famed for its salmon. The river looks like a blue-green lake with white caps. A huge slide has denuded the hillside. Past the Cascade Locks and Bonneville Dam built in 1933 to tame the river, to the Columbia River Fish Hatchery.

Here, dozens of long net-covered ponds shelter the fry for two years. "No I don't want to buy fish food from the machine."

After passing Horse Tail Falls, we pause for a photo opportunity at Multnomah Falls. At 620ft they are the fifth highest continuously running falls.

At Vista Point, high on a bluff to our left, is a circular, domed structure, the Dormel Building, dedicated to all the early settlers.

Back in Portland, our room keys no longer work. Evidently they shared the same space as some magnets we bought for the refrigerator. Re-keying took care of it.



206. International Test Rose Gardens, Portland.





111.



207.



211. Timberline Lodge, Mt. Hood.



213.



217.



220. Mt. Hood, ski -field.



221. Mt Hood from Drapers Fruit Stand.



219. Lunch in the Mt. Hood Room, Timberline Lodge.



223. Like flies swarming around Drapers Fruit Stand.



Columbia River Gorge.



Bonneville Lock and Dam.

228-229. Multnomah Falls.





230. Yes, we were there.



233. Outside Captain Morgan's Steakhouse, Longbeach



225. Fish Hatchery. The long troughs in front hold the fish.

Day 7 ~ Wednesday, 15th August.

Crossing the Columbia River, we enter Washington, the 42nd State. This is the Olympic Mountain Rain Forest. East of the Cascades is a desert, but here is lush forest. On interstate 205 we glimpse flat top Mt. St. Helens.

A temporary foldable red road sign reads "Ecology Crew Working." A euphemism for garbage pick up.

We follow the Columbia River north to Longview.

Mount St. Helens erupted disastrously on May 18th, 1980. 57 people were lost. Blown sideways, with power equal to 500 Hiroshima bombs, 1300ft was removed from the peak leaving a crater 1.2 x 2.4 miles wide. Still an active volcano, about 900ft has been added back.

The visitor center, completed in 1987, tells a story of the events. Here we watch a movie. The center is many miles from the peak which we view in the distance.

The Columbia leads us along Rt. 101 to Long Beach with its tidal estuary and mud flats.

After lunch at Captain Morgan's Steakhouse, we unload our change for the tip. Morgan's has an enormous eight sided grilling station. An individual gas grill on each side for patrons use. Above, an over size stainless steel umbrella being the vent. Strangely the cook came out to grill our burgers here. No grill in the kitchen?

We have a few minutes before the coach leaves, so we walk at fast pace to the board walk and out to the beach. Long, flat, it looks clean. We don't have time to paddle.

Well kept gardens separate pedestrians from automobiles. I ask a gardener "What are those flowers with huge red fruits?"

"Rigossa, the Tomato Rose."

Now I recognize the rose hip, tiny rose leaves and delicate miniature flowers.

In 1854 the Indians showed pioneers Espy & Clark oyster beds. They made a killing selling in San Francisco. These were the original *Olys* now largely replaced by the *Pacific Oyster*.

Oysters are started from seed; develop through a type of larvae stage in tanks, before being transferred to oyster beds for two or more years to mature.

In the 1970's, Oysterville, a collection of historic homes, was designated a National Landmark. There are only 22 residents. Oyster shells are used as a mulch. The shucking station is idle, but the little store is selling goodies to go.

Back on Rt. 101. "Look, there's deer." But they are just metal cut outs.

It is 5:30pm as we pull in to Aberdeen, named by the first settlers from Scotland. Now turn on 109 to Ocean Shores. To our left is Grays Harbor.

Tonight we stay at the Quinault Resort & Casino. Outside a sign welcomes our tour group, Tri-State Travel, and notes a birthday and anniversary being celebrated.

The luggage arrives promptly.

Of course, to get anywhere in this hotel, one must pass through the Casino; which we do to reach the Great Hall. With hands stamped for identification we are led to our table and from there attack the buffet. The meat is good, chicken teriyaki or pulled pork, but not a great selection of other things.

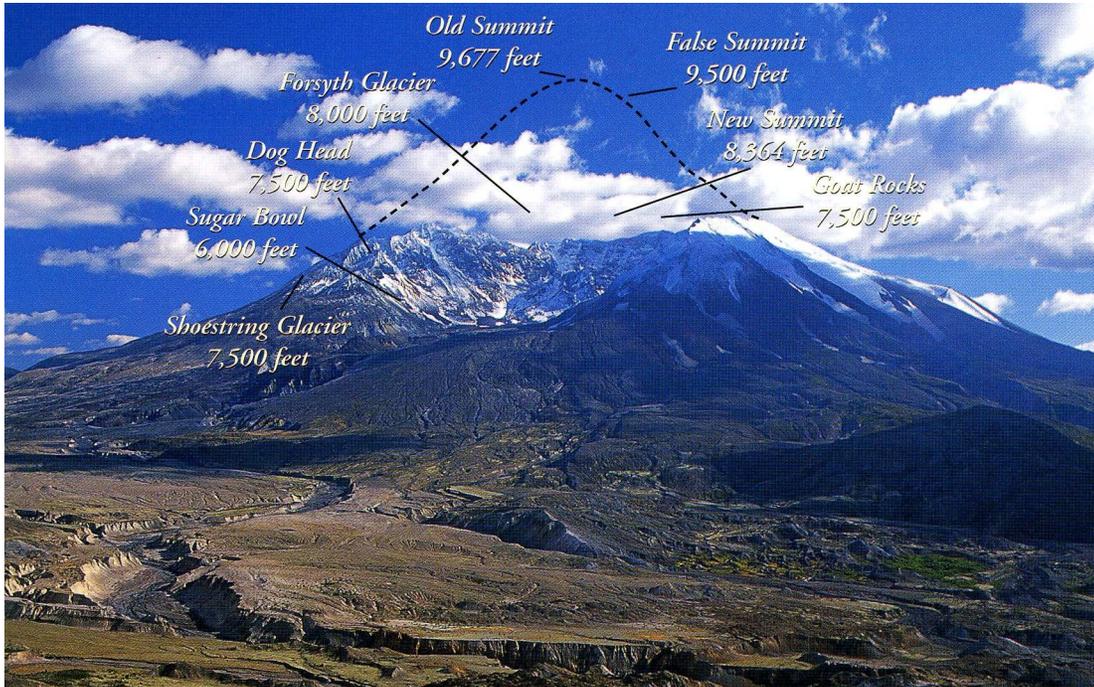
Jeff hands me my iPaq which I must have left on the bus. I had not even missed it!

The casino is all plastic, no coins. We exchange a \$20 bill for a plastic ticket and play a penny slot for a while. Tiring, we try to get our plastic ticket back, but how? Jan asks an Indian guard "How do I get my ticket back." He thinks we are idiots, but strolls over and punches a button which initiates printing a new ticket with an updated total. Having mastered the art of slotting, we play on for forty minutes.

Time to cash out. We are up 17¢.

An attractive young lady stands by us in the bar, her evening dress can only be described as a swimsuit with legs!

Our room has a fireplace. A nice touch for winter.



The 1980 eruption of Mt. St. Helens. This picture shows how much material was “lost.”



Spirit Lake Mt. St. Helens.



Before.



After.



234. Long Beach.



238. Oysterville.



235. Why does Oysterville need a canon?



240. Schoolhouse.



236. Oysterville Church.



239.



241. In the foreground a modern home. To the right a mature property.

Day 8 ~ Thursday, 16th August.

There is a 25min wait for a breakfast table. I decide it is cold and go back to the room to change into jeans. After being seated, there is another wait to be served. The folks at the next table have been waiting an hour. Apparently the hotel is short of staff. Still we are ahead of Steve and Jeff.

Harassed waitress number one announces “ I will be back shortly.”

“Would you like a free orange juice?” asks another waiter. I thought it was all free.

A second waitress takes our order. After ten minutes waitress number one comes to take it. Mass confusion!

We back track to Aberdeen then take highway 12 to Olympia, capital city since 1853. It is a typical Pacific Coast morning. Our first and only drizzle.

Jeff has a book of jokes and reads us the joke du jour.

Is the tide *always* out?

Across the bridge in Aberdeen, to our right a vast lumber yard. There must be a quarter mile of logs piled high.

At 287ft, the capitol building in Olympia boasts the fourth largest masonry dome in the world. The Farmers Market is modest. I could shop this in 15min. Not too many bargains, but very clean. The meat prices look competitive, but earrings are expensive. Sunk into the floor, on which we are walking, are memorial stones, apparently marking the lives of people associated with the market. On the roof a flying pig wind vane. Outside, across the street, a circular garden bounded by fancy ironwork proclaims *the Triumph of the Vegetables*.

A short walk along the pier brings us to the Budd Bay Café overlooking the marina with \$...\$ yachts. After lunch the ladies storm a boutique.

“Did you buy anything?” I ask.

“No, who is a size ten?”

At 4:00pm we pull into Tacoma and head for the Art Museum. At the entrance a guide gives us a long introduction and impressive list of do's and don'ts. “Yes Mam.” I sign the register to receive a photo pass. I have promised not to sell any pictures for personal gain.

“You may not use pens, please get a pencil from the front desk.” I still have it.

The museum style is very modern, ramps and floating stairs to the various levels and galleries. A courtyard presents a field of glass spheres. A famous glass artist, Dale Chihuly, has his studio in Tacoma. Cases and wall displays feature his colorful art.

A gallery is filled with Japanese art. I lift a veil covering one piece and learn it is painted block art, several centuries old. The veil protects it from excessive light.

Some pieces are weird, like the duo-latrine.

I take a few pictures. "Excuse me sir, you can't take pictures."

"Ugh?"

"Nothing in the galleries, only the glass and dog in the front lobby."

Thinks, why did I wait in line for a photo ID? Good cardboard doggy.

Heart flutter. We don't expect messages at the Hilton. Problems?

"Welcome to the Hilton...."

And I had to call down to telephone service to find out how to get this. Dial 29. Who knows that!



State Capitol, Olympia.



242. Everywhere flowers in the Farmers Market.



243. Veggies too.



244. Steel silhouettes move in the wind.



247. Triumph of the Vegetables..... Strange!



248. Must be a working day.



250. Lunch anyone?

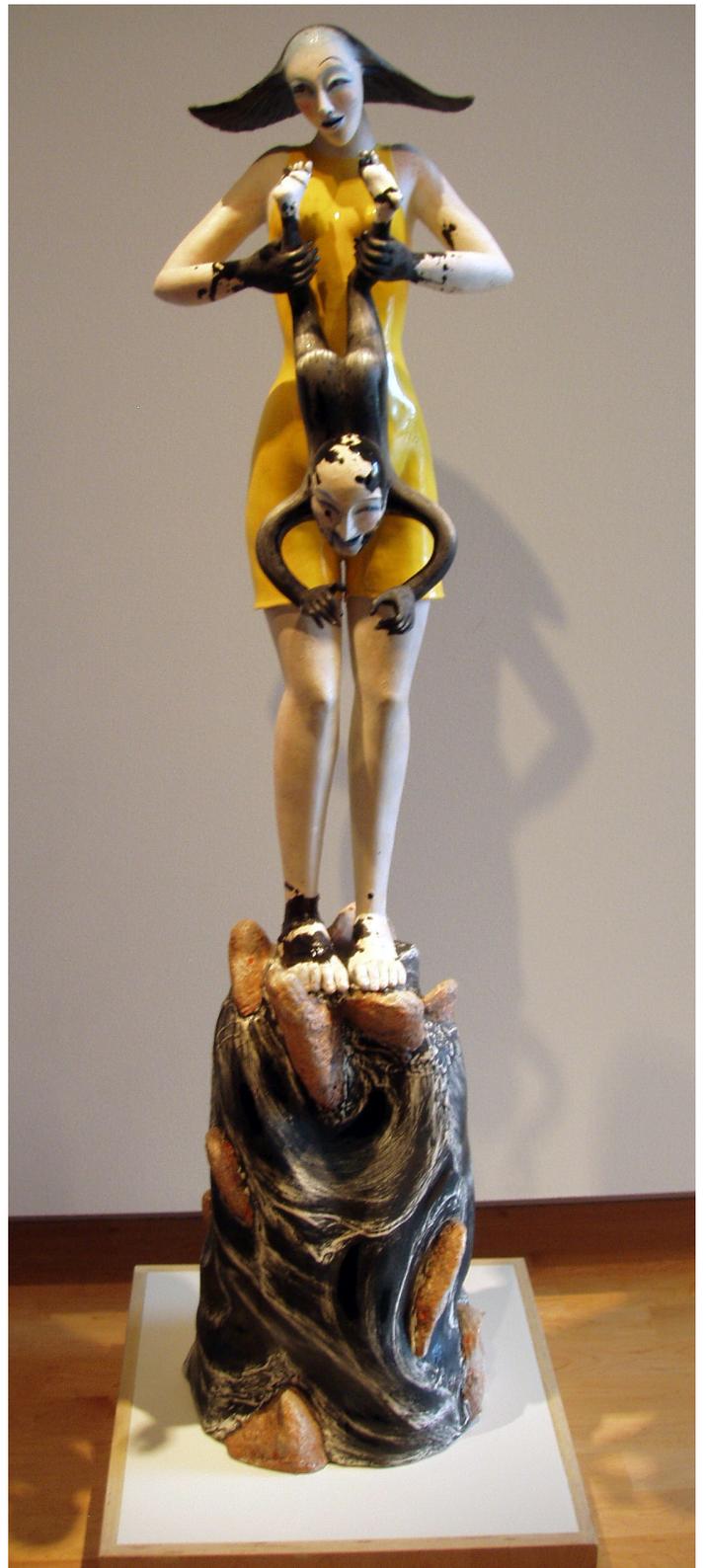
Tacoma Art Museum.



Alex Schweder. *Bi-Bardon*, 2001 Vitreous China. And THIS is art?



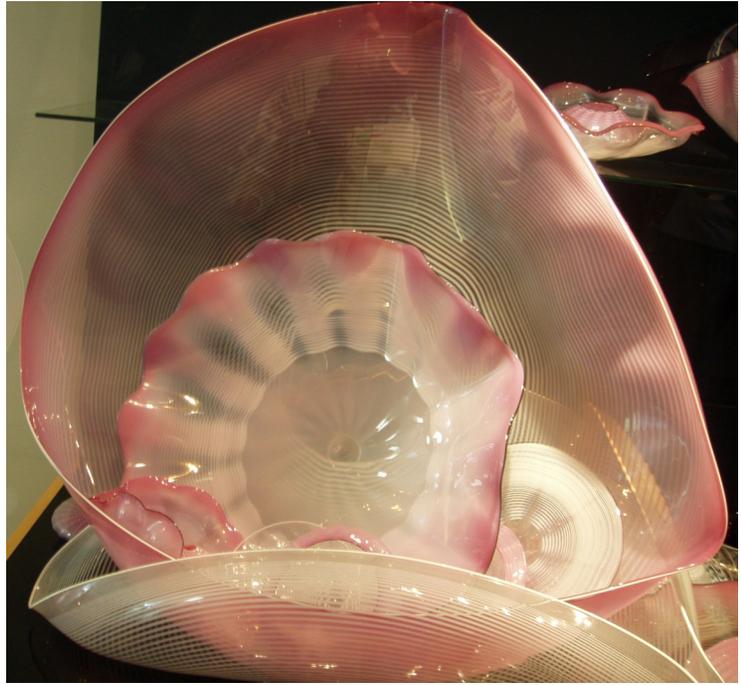
Suzuki Harunobu. Part of a series on love. Woodblock print c.1769.



253. Who knows? Maybe *Naughty Child*..



261. Cardboard doggy.



260. Glass work by Dale Chihuly.



Tacoma Architecture.

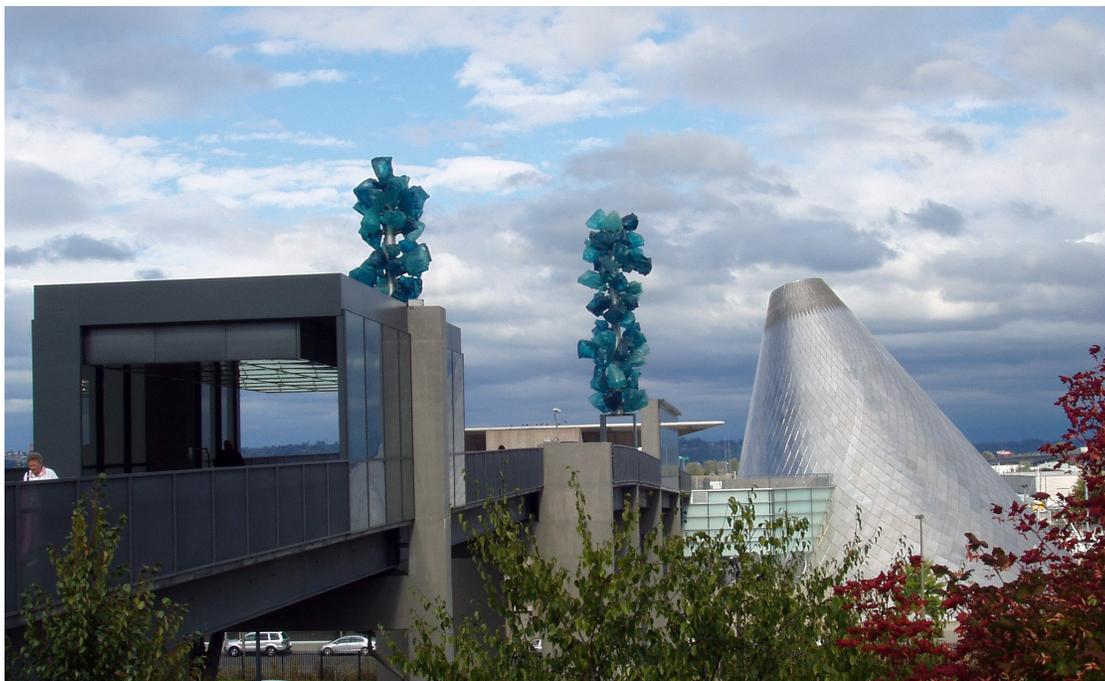
258.



255.



263.



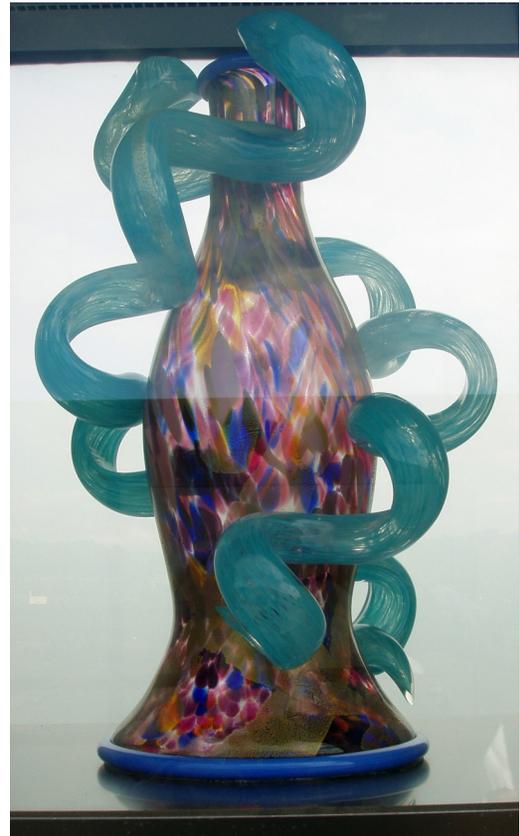
262.



264. Roof over bridge to Glass Museum.



265. Glass art on the bridge.



266. Examples of art in show cases on the bridge.



268. Marina.



270. Who is your friend?



269. Bridge.

Day 9 ~ Friday, 17th August.

2.5 million people live in greater Seattle, the Emerald City, and we are going to see most of them from the Space Needle. Nice to be in a group, we go to the front of the line and make a rapid ascent, 41 seconds to the viewing platform 520ft above the metropolis. A smooth ride.

Edward E. Carlson, chairman of the 1962 World's Fair in Seattle, originally had the idea for erecting the tower with a restaurant at the top as part of the World's Fair celebration.

The views are spectacular. "Look there is Mt. Rainier. It looks like a giant snow cone."

Traffic is light until we reach Pikes Market which is celebrating its centennial today. The market occupies 9 acres housing 50 restaurants and 190 shops. A huge sprawling chain of buildings on three floors.

We ease ourselves between the crowd. Every imaginable item is for sale, except furniture. Masses of produce and beautiful flowers. A vendor picks up a huge fish from an iced table and throws it to a waiting colleague at the back of the stall, where it is cut, weighed and packed. They will ship anywhere in 48hrs.

A man strolls by with a live possum perched on his shoulder and there is an African Grey Parrot performing. Several entertainers play for tips.

Out front a TV crew is broadcasting live. Fascinating to watch the producer hastily write topics to discuss on a ink board. The two hosts, man and lady, talk animatedly with exaggerated enthusiastic gestures.

"No Jan, we can't wait 60min until they cut the cake."

Sadly, in Pioneer Square we see homeless, drawn here by the mild climate.

The great fire was started by heating glue over a gasoline fire in 1889. 120 acres, 25 city blocks burned. Seattle was re-built on the rubble and it is possible to take an underground tour of the old foundations.

This is a high tech town. 50% of the 18-25 age group have degrees. It was named Emerald City for the seven green hills surrounding it.

One of our group asks a lady to move her mini-van so the bus can park.

It is 1:00pm, 69°F and sunny. At the marina we transfer to the *Champagne Lady* for a cruise on Lake Washington and under the Evergreen floating bridge into Lake Union. A sea plane lands to our right. I had no idea these were still used for commercial aviation.

We pass a long row of floating homes made famous in the film "Sleepless in Seattle." These are only about 600sq ft. but can cost \$2m. Tired of restrictions, one individual decided to secede from the Union.

Arboretum Park is built on land reclaimed when the levels of Lake Union and Lake Washington were equalized in 1916 to improve navigation.

Built in 1940, the Evergreen Point Floating Bridge, officially the Governor Albert D. Rosellini Bridge—Evergreen Point, is the longest floating bridge in the world at 7,578 feet. It carries Washington State Rt. 520 across Lake Washington from Seattle to Medina.

Here in Medina, on the south side of Lake Washington, is Bill Gates pad, a modern design in the "Pacific lodge" style, with classic features such as a large private library and a domed reading room. The house occupies 50,000 square feet on a 5.15 acre lot. Garage space and outbuildings add an additional 16,000 square feet. There are eight bedrooms and four building levels. As of 2005, the assessed value of the property is \$125 million, with annual property tax of \$990,000. The lot was purchased in December 1988 for \$2 million. Construction occurred over a period of seven years with nominal completion in 1995.

Skirting Mercer Island, we pass a home on the point, recently sold for \$5.9m. Sigh.....

Husky Stadium is one of only two stadia reached by boat.

A Police Launch goes screaming by, for us the speed limit is 7 knots about 8 mph.

At Pier 55 we board the *Good Time II* for Tillicum Village on Blake Island in Puget Sound. Blake Island State Park was an ancestral campground of the Suquamish and Duwamish Indian Tribes believed to be the birthplace of Chief Seattle. The island was named after Captain George Blake, commander of the US Coast Survey vessel in 1837.

The Olympic Mountains loom on the horizon to our west. Ahead, but inland, a 10 acre forest fire is smoking in Olalla.

A tug is pulling what looks like a floating island of dredgings.

We land. No adult drinks allowed. Several tables along the shore have pots of clams. I try a few. Jan is not so brave. Inside the *Longhouse* we wait briefly in line. To our right, salmon is being cooked. Each piece laced to a wood frame surrounding a sparkling Alder wood fire.

This is a people-eating-process-factory-buffet. Nice, clean, methodical. The longhouse seats about 400 on three levels. Our table is on the second level. I am fortunate to be adjacent to the railing and duck under it for 'seconds'.

Out go the lights. The story of Indian folklore begins. I take video.

It is sunset.



286. Seattle Space Needle.



277. Port of Seattle from Space Needle.



284. Downtown Seattle.



287. Pike Place Market.



288. Pretty ladies.



289.



483. Fish



Flying fish.



297. We can't wait for cake.



298. On the air.



308. Floating homes.



310. Evergreen Floating Bridge. Actually, it is a section, not in view, to the left which floats.



311. Bill Gates Pad.



321. The channel joining the lakes.



320. Husky Stadium.



324. Champaign Lady.



323. Sea Plane.



329. Seattle Harbor.



332. Bright sun.

330. Skyline.





334. Tillicum Village.



335. Traditional crafts.



335a. The show.



336. Cooking salmon.



338. Goodnight!

Day 10 ~ Saturday, 18th August.

At the airport. We have separate seats. Different rows. Two window seats. Opposite sides of the plane. After some trading we sit behind each other. The good news is we know everyone around us.

We land on time. Again our luggage is handled for us to the bus. This is the way to travel. John has parked our car outside Staples so we could drive home.

Freeport has had lots of rain while we were away. All we need to do now is mow the grass.

This has been a great trip, with nice traveling companions and fantastic weather.