

PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY ROADTRIP



After the success of the Route 66 roadtrip last October we are now ready to tackle the west side of the USA. Rick and I are being joined by Pete Starkey and Alun Morgan and his son Robert. Unfortunately, Professor Martin Goosey and his son Peter are only able to join us for a short time when we reach San Francisco. Without Martin's sobering and thoughtful influence the groups' dynamics may change – more gin for us all and perhaps a bit of night clubbing!!!

Check out: <http://www.lulu.com/content/2825125>.

Pete has sent me some maps and books in advance – what a responsibility! Our journey starts in Seattle and we are hoping to finish it just across the Mexican border. I am a bit overwhelmed with all the info and would be most grateful to hear of any “**must see's**” Not sure what they are interested in but there seems to be a lot of redwood trees and surfing along the way. Maybe we will be able to throw in a train or two as men seem very keen on that sort of thing. Early one morning on the last trip when Rick caught Martin taking photographs of trains, he insisted he was taking them for someone else. We're not so sure of that now, as a picture of him standing next to a train has appeared in my email box.

This Tuesday we had a great pre-trip evening and meal with Alun at the Black Horse in Binsted. Chris was a great host and his partner Simon, who rides a motorbike, was keen to hear all about the Harley's and the technical stuff. As usual we spent most of the evening running down Gordon Brown; it seems we all hate him even more than ever and with good cause. The conversation moved onto the environment where we all agree that all this eco stuff is a load of rubbish - the earth is constantly evolving, it's just another way to screw more money out of us.

Rick is a changed man, he is growing his hair (maybe the beard will re-appear) and appears to be trying to organise himself this time. He has even got himself sorted with a prescription pair of Police sunglasses but is insisting on wearing old men's shorts and socks with his sandals. I am going to give him a packing check-list so we don't have to keep stopping to shop for things he has forgotten. His back is just about OK at the moment but he still has tennis elbow.



Saturday 16 August 2008 – Flying Business Class to Seattle

After a great deal of procrastination I finally agreed to book Business Class tickets with KLM, the cost wasn't too different to that of BA's Premium Economy. Rick has flown 1st class before and thought we should give it a go.

I was wrong, Rick hasn't changed – as soon as we arrived at Heathrow he realised he had forgotten his driving licence. Frantic calls to the car hire company in the States confirmed that he would need a certified copy sent from the DVLA. The DVLA were very helpful and said this happens all the time but their computers were down and they wouldn't be able to send a copy over until Monday. Then I had the brilliant idea to ring our recent house guest Tony, who could find it and bring it to the airport. Rick was concerned that he wouldn't have time to use the Business Class Lounge; he even considered delaying the flight until the next day. The manager on the check-in desk said he would personally take it to the plane if it arrived whilst we were boarding. Thinking that may be a bit dodgy Rick decided he would wait at the check-in area until the boarding time of 6pm as we were being fast tracked anyway.

The dollar has taken a hammering in recent weeks and I read an article in the paper detailing how to get the best rate. We recently set up a Nationwide Flex Account to use in the ATM's as there is no foreign transaction charge but can't use that just yet as it was delayed because Rick forgot to sign the form. Getting foreign exchange at the airport is the most expensive route and Travelex is the worst. There were two foreign exchange places at the check-in area, American Express (\$1.77 to the £) and Travelex (\$1.73).

I had a lovely time looking at the shops and drinking my glass of wine in the Business Lounge while Rick was given the responsibility of changing up the money and waiting for his Driving Licence to appear. It seems he spent most of time drinking Stella's in Wetherspoons. Tony did a magnificent job (1.25 hrs) giving Rick enough time to join me in the Business Lounge and to down a couple of glasses of wine. He confessed that he changed the money up at Travelex by mistake, as after signing the form he queried why the rate had gone down so much in a short time and found out he wasn't at the American Express exchange.

I was getting anxious as some time before it said the gate was closing and he was showing no signs of leaving and when he did he needed the toilet. They were waiting for us at the gate as we were the last to board. We were moved right up to the front of the plane as Rick had somehow booked us seats that backed onto the toilets and the economy seats that were full of women and babies. I don't know how he managed it but originally he booked us seats in different rows. We were greeted with a glass of champagne but had to queue for some time on the runway. After all his lagers and wine Rick needed the toilet again but the steward said he would have to wait. The seats were great as they went down into a bed. Although there was quite a selection of films they were all old. [There was plenty of food with a huge selection of teas and you get to have a tablecloth and metal cutlery.](#)

[We both slept most of the way and we were last on and first off. Seattle is a big, big airport.](#)

Sunday 17 August – Seattle

We both have bad jetlag. Went to bed at 11.30pm and woke at 1.30 am. Rick worked on his ICT web site for the rest of the night while I spent about 3 hours looking at maps etc to help plan our route. There was quite a storm going on about 4am. Breakfast at The Best Western was good – fruit, yogurt, make-your-own waffles, home made sausage gravy with biscuits and much more. Skyped Jen. Picked up the car and booked ourselves onto a City Tour. Stopped at Safeway to stock up with water, coke, crisps, tonic, beers and apples. You have to go to a Liquor Stores for spirits. We asked the Safeway packer where the nearest one was and he looked at us as if we had asked for some hard drugs.

There are many attractions in Seattle – lots of industry and leisure activities centred around the lakes. I seem to be allergic to something as ever since we arrived my eyes and nose have been streaming and I am completely stuffed up. Bill Gates \$125 million mansion is here as is the Amazon.com headquarters. I missed quite a bit of the tour as I kept falling asleep. Seattle is the birthplace of grunge music (Nirvana and

the Foo Fighters) and has a reputation for heavy coffee consumption. It has a history of boom and bust cycles, the first boom being fuelled by the lumber industry, the second as a direct result of the Klondike Gold Rush, next came ship building, then the expansion of Boeing and now the technology companies. The Space Needle is Seattle's most recognizable landmark featuring in Frasier, Grey's Anatomy and of course the famous film "Sleepless in Seattle". Watched the salmon in the lock going from sea water to fresh water.

It still amazes us how friendly the Americans are. They always ask each other where they are from, and although it may only be a different state to them, they are just as excited and interested as if it was another country. The people on our trip were mostly in the 70 – 80's age group with lots of walking sticks and puffing going on.

Had a dreadful meal of steak and broccoli at the IHop washed down with diet coke. Went to the pub across the road for a welcome drink with Pete, Alun and Robert. As Robert is under 21 he had to stay outside, we couldn't even pass him a coke. Everyone in the pub was excited about our forthcoming trip and each one offered us advice on the best route to take. As it didn't close until midnight we called into the Harley shop to have a look at the bikes. We are all looking forward to a good night's sleep.

Monday 18 August – Seattle 17° C with prolonged periods of rain and showers

188 miles



The boys picked up their bikes: Pete has a black 1594cc Harley Heritage Softtail Classic and Alun and Robert have an electric blue 1594cc Harley Electra Glide Classic with Brembo brakes, both bikes are 2008 models. It's expensive to hire the bikes, approximately \$2000 each which is twice the cost of our car hire. Alun has as many, if not more, gadgets than Rick so I have left him to compete on the gadget front which is good as he has lost interest in my phone. As it was raining and we were going to spend the day in Seattle we all piled into the car. Alun has bought a waterproof sat nav for his bike so we had both going in the car. Apparently it is 4983 miles from Gatwick to Seattle. The sat navs initially lead us to pay our respects to Jimi Hendrix at the Hendrix Memorial in Renton. Alun wished we had bought some flowers for him to brighten up the dismal day. Then it was onto pay our respects to Bruce Lee at the Lakeview Cemetery, not much of a memorial to mark such a great man. Robert was very taken with an inscription on a bench nearby "How to be immortal - First you must live a life worth remembering".

We still hadn't got the gin, Alun entered "Liquor" into his sat nav and it led us through lots of back roads and finished outside what Robert thought was a girlie bar, perhaps a bar where you can buy girls. He refined his search on his Garmin and we once again went through some back roads and ended not too far away from the Bruce Lee cemetery. Alun and Pete came out of the Liquor Store armed with a couple of bottles of gin in a brown paper bag. Pete thinks that they mustn't be visible and have to be stored in the back of the car. Just down the road was the Jimi Hendrix Commemorative Statue. Rick saw him 4 times and was lucky enough to be able to go to his last concert in the Isle of Wight. Alun who was only about 13 at the time was intending to go until his mother found out. Hendrix is also one of Pete's heroes. There was the obligatory trip to the Harley store to buy teeshirts. The boys have travelled light, very light not like us. We then stopped for a relaxing lunch at a waterfront fish restaurant and I was made responsible for the kitty. As we made our way to the Space Needle it became the battle of the Sat Navs - Garmin v Tom Tom. They weren't agreeing, the tall buildings were sending them astray and sending us up one way streets. As it wasn't too busy we took the ride to the top of the Space Needle to view the city. Pete was a bit nervous but we were

pleased to have made the effort. From the top we were relieved to get a good view of our car as whilst we were parking we had a bit of hassle with someone trying to get money out of us. Thankfully he hadn't smashed the windows with his brolly.



Back to the hotel to pick up the bikes and catch up with the Olympic news. Alun installed his sat nav and fettled Starkey's throttle cable as there was too much slack. It was 5.15pm and rush hour when we finally started our 2.5 hour journey to the Best Western Hotel in Woodland, Washington. Petrol here is 50% cheaper than at home, we worked it out to be about 58p/litre. I kept nodding off but the scenery was mostly fir trees on either side of us. After about an hour and a half we stopped for the boys to stretch their legs. They sent me in to get the coffee's – mission impossible as there was a choice of 16 different types of coffee and 8 different types of creamer – no skimmed milk though and 3 different sized cups. In Safeway yesterday there was a whole section designated entirely to Peanut Butter. In some restaurants and hotels being over 55 qualifies us for a reduction in costs. We have \$10 off tonight's accommodation. We arrived at the hotel at 8pm and it was drinks at the Woodies for 8.20pm not much time to wash and change. The gin bottle went down well, so well that it went straight to my head and I forgot to take the kitty to the restaurant, luckily Alun bailed me out. No talk of Gordon Brown tonight but instead we realise that we all have something in common, we were all rebels at schools and none of us were prefects. Young Robert is the exception, he is on his gap year and has just spent six months in Japan. I fell asleep with my computer still attached.

Tuesday 19th August – to Lincoln City via Astoria
191 miles – weather terrible



Well and truly jet lagged as I was up at 4am sorting out the photos and writing up my diary. We both have our laptops and Rick has been downloading loads of podcasts and heavy biker music. Robert was telling us that in Japan internet speed of 100mb's/second is standard (it's about 4 -8 mb's at home) and you even get 5 -10 mb's on your phone. They all watch live TV on their mobiles. Are you getting impressed with all this technical data I am learning? Before setting off we had to admire Alun's handiwork as he now has fixed both the sat nav and camera to his bike. Men love recognition. Our objective is to travel as far as possible down the Pacific Highway 101. We are still about 2 hours from the coast and hope to join 101at Astoria, we will miss out the Washington bit above Astoria but although scenic it is mostly trees. Where there are road works instead of traffic lights they have men or woman holding up "stop" or "go" signs. Rick's podcasts are very, very boring but his biker's downloads help keep us awake.



Astoria on a dismal day



Lovely woody, smoky smell – smoking on premises



The beast was a poodle!

Once we reached Astoria it started to rain so we had an early lunch in Stephanie's Cabin. Astoria is dominated by the Astoria Bridge that spans the Columbia River and once again separates the states of Oregon and Washington. It opened in 1966 and is the world's largest continuous truss bridge at 4.1 miles long. We were thinking that we should give it a go just to say that we have been on Highway 101 in Washington. We could all go in the car if the rain kept up. Back to the lunch, we are once again bombarded with choice – how about this for steak: Blood Red – raw centre: Rare – warm raw centre: Medium Rare – warm pink centre: Medium – hot pink centre: Medium Well – Broiled throughout: Well – smaller, tougher, dry or Cajun Blackened Pan – seared and spicy. This is the country of choice, Rick worked out there were 864 combinations of coffee in the garage yesterday. Pete took advantage of his senior status and ordered a senior portion of fish and chips, three pieces of fish instead of four. After lunch we were beginning to feel full and a bit sleepy, afternoon naps came into mind – poor Robert having to put up with all this oldie talk when he is classed as a minor and can't even go into some restaurants.



Despite the rain we crossed the bridge and headed towards Chinook, this peninsula is famous for oysters and cranberries, and rode right next to the ocean. We had then officially started our Highway 101 journey proper. We passed through Seaside where the rain and wind increased considerably, then Cannon Beach with its craggy headlands and sea stacks offshore. Spotted our first "Tsunami Hazard Zone" sign. Most of the houses and bungalows are made of wood and there are lots of trailer parks and lakes covered in lilies. The boys had to stop and put on their wet gear, it was getting cold, windy and very wet. It was such a shame about the weather as the gentle, winding roads would have made for a good ride. Now that Alun has his sat nav we are bit redundant and he is leading the way. They still need us for storage, the occasional ride and entertainment. We thought that the 101 ran close to the sea but at times we were quite some way inland. Nehalem was particularly pretty and Wheeler only has a population of 350. On our approach to Tillamook

the smell of manure hit us. Tillamook has a booming cheese industry with approximately 23,300 people and 22,000 cows. We passed through Oceanside, then Pacific City that's popular with hang gliders and famous for its dory fleet and onto Neskowin with its golf courses.

We at last reached our Comfort Inn Motel in Lincoln City, the Kite Capital of the World with its unique location on the 45th parallel giving it steady winds. Apparently it is an excellent location for wave, whale, sunset and storm watching and wind surfing. We couldn't confirm this as it was blowing a gale and pouring with rain. The bikers were cold and wet, Pete could wring his gloves out and said he needed a spa to give some relief to his sore bottom and aching back and shoulders. What a wonderful welcome we received, Rick did a magnificent job getting this motel and even Alun qualified for the senior rate at 50 and guess what, they even had a swimming pool, spa and a laundry where they could dry their clothes off. There was a gas fire glowing in reception which warmed the boys up and the friendly receptionist went off to make us a fresh pot of coffee. Unfortunately, the weather wasn't going to improve tomorrow, it's all to do with tropical storm Fay and 50 mph winds were forecasted for tonight. I suppose it could be expected as storm watching is a major sport here but it is August after all! As it was pouring with rain Rick very kindly offered to forego his gin and drive us to the restaurant but we settled for a Chinese takeaway washed down with our last bottle of gin. We bagged up all the empty containers etc and put them outside on our balcony so our room didn't stink of Chinese food. Robert was suffering badly from jetlag and bored to death by us reminiscing about printed circuit colleagues and events. Having been up since 4 am I was also getting very tired and sat on the bed with my laptop, then I got chilly and got under the top cover and eventually got right in but I was fully clothed. Alun took a picture of me in the bed with my laptop, I hope he doesn't show it to anyone as they may wonder what he was doing in my bedroom.

Wednesday 20th August – Lincoln City – North Bend

Weather – even worse than yesterday – 125 miles

I must give our missing friends, Professor Martin Goosey and his son Peter a mention as poor Martin is having to work long days and even weekends in Palto Alto near the bay area before he moves to Dallas. I am sending them copies of my blog and they are very disappointed to have missed all the Jimi Hendrix bit as they are both avid fans of his music. Just heard from him and he has just given his deposition for a court case that lasted eleven hours and is absolutely shattered. They have given him the weekend off so we can now meet up in San Francisco and he can admire the boys' bikes.



It's still raining but not heavily. Pete has five friends who have rented Harleys and are in the San Diego area sweltering in over 30°. Two of them are on their honeymoon, Pete having been to their wedding last Saturday. After breakfast we all clambered into our car to take a look at the sandy beach opposite, it was too wet to walk. It looked dismal but I am sure it looks wonderful in good weather. A very overweight man was making his way down the steps and a kite was flying in the distance. As we set off I commented that it wasn't raining as hard as yesterday and no sooner the words came out of my mouth then it poured. Yesterday as Alun was riding over the 4.1 mile bridge in the wind and rain he turned up the volume as he listened to "Riders in the Storm, quite apt". Who cares about the weather, we put on Rick's ipod and sat back to enjoy the drive anyway. Highway 101 is mostly a two lane road much like England, I suppose it

must seem quaint to the Americans as they are used to the wide roads with many lanes. Highway 101 at this point follows the coast quite closely and there were big rocks standing out to sea with trees growing out of them. The sandy beaches are full of drift wood and dead trees. The small towns have a seaside feel to them with lots of small shops. What is this weather? I am beginning to dream of lying on a sunny beach and being able to run in and out of the sea but I would be just as satisfied at being able to take my fleece off. Rick has tried to sneak one of his boring podcasts in again but he followed it up with Meatloaf who I quite like. We passed through Depoe Bay with the world's smallest harbour that featured in "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest". Apparently the ocean there shoots geysers 60 feet through two natural fountains. Passed through Cape Foul Weather that certainly lived up to its name. Highway 101 then took us close to the long sandy beaches of Beverly Beach where the scenery changed dramatically with all the vegetation bent by the wind. There were signs saying \$97 dollar fines for not wearing your seatbelt – why not make it \$100. Yesterday's cinemas were quaint and old fashioned now they were more modern. Next was Newport, Oregon's premier resort with crabbing and clam digging, windsurfing, scuba diving, shopping, art galleries, golf, museums, theatres and storm and whale watching. Of course we never got to see any of this but we would have liked to have visited the Oregon Coast Aquarium and the Marine Science Centre. We were worried for the bikers as they crossed the bridge as it was so wet and windy. We moved in and out of the Tsunami Hazard Zones.



We stopped for lunch at a Mexican Restaurant in Yachats. The bikers were very wet; Pete's gloves needed wringing out again. They had a whole menu devoted to Margaritas and I jokingly said I could skip the food and just have a Margarita but they all said if I did that they would make sure it got into the blog. Alun is definitely into gadgets and has a Bluetooth walkie talkie that integrates with his sat nav and is fixed to his helmet to enable him to talk to Robert and answer the phone. Robert's gloves have a squeegee on them to wipe the visa. Not being able to see properly in the rain is the main problem for Pete, he could have done with Robert's gloves. He wished he had brought his gaffer tape with him. The bad weather had slowed us down quite a bit as we were only averaging 30 – 40 mph and the temperature is between 13 - 15°. After lunch we set off and despite the relentless rain and wind went over the Conde McCullough Bridge in Florence. As we approached Cape Peninsula we were in the clouds because of the high cliffs. Then came the Sea Lion Caves. I wouldn't like to live in the wooden houses perched on those cliffs even though they overlook the sea and some fantastic beaches. I am feeling a bit fat and have to do something about the Harley belly I have started to develop. Thank goodness I haven't got the beard to go with it. We then approached Sand Dune country, you just wouldn't believe the size of them, some as big as small mountains. We saw a house number 83,720. We are once again surrounded by trees, trees and more trees.

The Comfort Inn in North Bend weren't ready for us so the boys, who were short of clothes, set off to the Harley Shop and we went to Macy's. We ended up buying two red, Delsey suitcases that were 50% off. I thought that they would be 50% cheaper than at home anyway and if they had 50% off perhaps we were getting them for nothing, work that one out. We won't be able to get all the boys in the car now that it is full of suitcases. They came back very pleased from the Harley shop and had bought several tops and Alun had bought a Harley earring. As our room still wasn't ready we went on the gin run. Alun and Rick left me sitting in the car outside the Liquor Store while they went into the supermarket. All sorts of strange people were going in and out of that store, lots of bearded men with wife killer teeshirts, and as Rick had the car keys I felt quite vulnerable. I forgot to tell you that when we were in reception we asked where the nearest Liquor Store was and a man in the queue started to laugh. Robert said it was because I was standing there with a bag full of lagers and tonics. It was gone 6pm before our room was ready. After drinks in our room and planning the next day we were too late for the restaurants nearby. Pete who is laid back and not into

gadgets has a very basic phone which didn't have a signal at this hotel, so neither did mine. He does have one very important one though, a penknife, and the huge responsibility each night of using it to slice the lemon for our g and t's. I left them making their way to the Thai up the road as all the restaurants round here closed at 9pm. The Thai was also closed but they found somewhere where they ate what looked like the worlds largest pizza.



Thursday 21 August – 232 miles

Weather – wait and see



Rick's back is a bit dodgy; it's lifting the suitcases in and out of the car. Perhaps I should make them lighter by using the new ones as well but that would mean lots of journey when we get to the motel. I have to be careful not to break my nails. As a result of the weather I haven't had a chance to wear anything other than the trousers I arrived in and last night I didn't even bother to wash and change before we went out – there wasn't time and the male influence is rubbing off. Rick got busy downloading an update of points of interest for his Tom Tom, he admits Alun's sat nav is better than his at the moment but its all about keeping it updated. Rick has been doing a great job each day searching for motels. It's a busy time of year and they are getting more expensive as we approach California. They are still good value as we are averaging \$100 a night for a twin double bedded room and breakfast; you could easily fit 4 in a room and they nearly all have free internet access. It's expensive for Pete being on his own, I said it was a shame he couldn't share a room with us. He laughed and said that he and Rick would be in one bed and me with my laptop in the other. Changing motels each night means having to work out how the taps and showers work as they are all different. The Comfort Inn showers are so low down that the men need to kneel.

The Dollar shop proved fruitful, everything really was a dollar. Rick got a double adaptor for the cigarette lighter and Pete went mad and purchased some spray on wax for his trousers, gaffer tape and a rucksack. I bought a bigger notebook. Dare I say it but the weather didn't look too bad – we didn't say it just in case. We started today's journey by going over the bridge into Reedsport again as it was blowing a gale and pouring with rain when we did it yesterday. Passed through Coos Bay where the original sawmill has been converted into a Casino. Next to it was the biggest mountain of wood chippings you ever did see. This area is the unofficial Myrtlewood capital with lots of shops on the way selling things made out of it. During the Depression it was issued as legal tender. We moved inland a bit as we drove towards Bandon, with the better driving conditions we were able to average 50 mph. Passed the Bandon Dunes and marshes and

blueberry signs. This area is famous for cranberries (major export Ocean Spray) that need to be grown in a balanced ecological setting which attracts many birds. Now and again we got a break from the tightly packed fir trees.



The sun started to come out as we made our way to Port Orford that is famous for its cedar trees. Unfortunately, unless they find a cure for a root fungus that is attacking them they will become extinct. What a difference the sun makes, we picked up the ocean again and every now and again as we turned a corner a fantastic panoramic view would open up. We stopped to look down at the ocean and across to Port Orford. The boys went off for a wee, Robert's bad tummy started but I couldn't find a place to go. Suddenly a load of motorbikes and RV's turned up so there was no chance of any privacy. Met Rosie and Ron a couple of old Harley enthusiasts. I was wondering why Ron wasn't able to rent a horse to drive on the Autobahn in Europe but I had misheard and it was a Porsche. The sky was so blue and the smell of the ocean was wonderful and fresh. We waited until most of them had gone and before others turned up but I could wait no longer and had to have a wee beside the car. We drove through a mist or was it cloud as we climbed towards the Humbug Mountain. A little while later the bikes pulled in as they thought I must be desperate by now. I laughed and said you obviously didn't get a photo of that! It all looked so lovely that Rick said perhaps he should get himself a Harley. Sounds great but where would I put all my luggage there is only just enough room for my toiletries. The cloud formation made the sea and sky blend into each other and it was difficult to make out the horizon.



There were long stretches of road between towns and we sat back, listened to Mark Knopfler and Pink Floyd and enjoyed the ride. Before we knew it we were being stopped at the Californian border where I had to declare my apples and bananas. They were resurfacing the road and Pete did a big wobble on the gravel. Highway 101 had moved inland a bit by now and we had fields of crops both sides and even some sheep. We had now entered Redwood country. Stopped for lunch at the Apple Pedlar in Crescent City and the boys said they had had the ride of their life. Crescent City seemed soulless, lacking in atmosphere with nothing much happening, perhaps because most of it was new as it was flattened by a tsunami in 1964. It was advertising a "Shark Petting Tank" so something exciting does happen. Timber was its first industry followed by commercial fishing, agriculture and tourism. Visitors are apparently attracted by the ocean, safe harbour, salmon, steelhead fish and of course the magnificent coastal redwood trees. We wanted to go into the Redwood Park so Alun and Rick got out their sat navs and furiously tried to find out where to go. We

were laughing at them trying to outdo each other. Actually, Alun hadn't been able to read yesterday's blog as his Blackberry is 3G and we were only getting a 2G reception. Pete and I are both on Orange and have no reception on our phones but we didn't say much about that. Rick's stomach started playing up too.

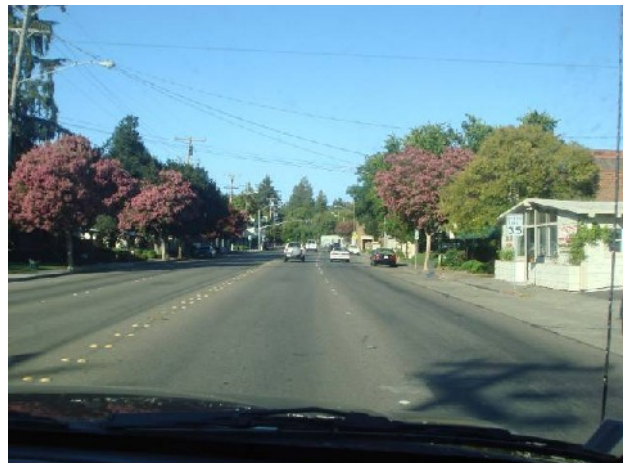
I got a local map from the Tourist Information Centre and we took the scenic drive to the Redwood Park. The sun had brought out more bikers, cyclists and a few hitchhikers, we also saw our first surfers. We took a turn at leading the way but were pleased when Alun took over again as it meant that Rick got snappy having to concentrate so much. We stopped to have a look at the Big Tree supposedly 1500 years old. It was big but it had broken off at the top. I am getting a bit blasé about trees as we have seen so many. Robert's tummy was still playing up and when we got back to the car I sneaked a couple of chapters of my book in. Alun and Rick came rushing to the car asking for the maps and I gave them the Seattle map by mistake. Suddenly they didn't want a map any more. It was so funny, they wanted it for this biker girl who had a very feminine voice but when she took her helmet off she had a full moustache, a real long one!! That frightened them. Put the Harley disc on, passed some elk and cows and picked up the ocean again outside Orick. Passed through Trinidad Bay and entered Clam Beach County Park. I wonder if it was the Clam Chowder that has upset Rick and Robert's tummy; they have been having it at lunchtime most days. Approaching Eureka we drove very close to the water and seemed to be at the same level as us. There was a small railway line right on the waters edge. In some places it's difficult to tell the difference between the ocean, river, lagoon etc.

Our motel was in Eureka and it was really busy but I suppose that was because it was 5pm by then. Had a swim and spa, downloaded photos and caught up with emails. Before I knew it was gin time again, the time when we plan the next day. Out come the sat nav's again and we are laughing at them battling away trying to be the first one to find the info. It's great he's not interested in my phone any more.



Friday 22 August 2008 – Eureka to Fairfield in Napa Valley

Mileage 294 – Weather hot in the afternoon but we didn't benefit as we were in the car



Had an early start, left Eureka in light drizzle and saw signs “\$1000 for littering “ and “Alton Population 275”, how often do they update these signs. I was anxious to get back to my book and found myself answering “yes” and “no” in the wrong places to Rick’s questions. This was agriculture land we were going through. I wonder how long these wooden houses last. The rugged terrain forced Highway 101 inland along the banks of River Eel. The cliffs were covered in fir trees and The Pacific Lumber Company stretched for about half a mile or maybe more. I suppose they have to store the wood for quite some time to season it but this shouldn’t be too much of a problem as there is plenty of space. We then did the 31 mile scenic drive through the Avenue of Giants with its 51,222 acres of giant redwood trees. So many trees, so many trees!!!!

Stopped to stretch our legs at The Legend of Bigfoot where they sold all sorts of things made out of wood. I fell in love with what was described as a “Funky Nesting Box” that I wanted to take home for my parents as it would be a marvellous present for them when they move into their new wooden house. I said I could put it in one of new empty cases but Rick said I was being ridiculous as it weighed a ton. I then got excited about a Cappy Critters Hat (a bears head) for his grandson Hector. “Are you mad” he said “boys won’t wear that sort of thing”. I came away with nothing. Back in the car, we are heading for Fort Bragg and it seems forever away. If he had let me buy something the journey would have gone quicker. Rick put on The Rolling Stones, I wish I had some of my crappy, sentimental music, his stuff is alright but I need a change. Rick bites chunks of his apple for me, we are being very married. I am starting to think about home, but I am not really missing it. Our neighbour Pauline is feeding Rick’s fish, I wonder if she just chucks the food in and runs like me or stands over them oooohing and ahhhhhing like Rick. Rick is thinking about the shed he is going to build when he gets back. We made a detour to visit a tree that you can drive through, which was good fun although a bit tight for the Trailblazer. We then had a challenging 22 mile drive through a narrow winding road, going in and out of daylight with sheer drops in places –exhausting for us and even more so for the bikers. It was well sign posted and at times we were down to just 10 mph. Rick said Alan’s sat nav has got it all wrong, it said our journey would average 60mph. Hooray, the sea at last even though it is still windy we have escaped the trees. There are lots of pink iris type flowers around.



We reached Fort Bragg by lunch time and tried to find somewhere to eat in Main Street. It was a proper town with a wide variety of shops, lots of arty stuff but not many eating places. Alun and Rick quickly punched in “points of interest” in their sat navs and lead us to Noyo Harbour where we found a fish café. Fort Bragg used to be an Indian Reservation. Although, exhausted the boys were exhilarated by the challenging ride. We were going to head for Napa Valley next and Rick’s sat nav said it would take 5.4 hours while Alun’s said 4.22. Alun said it was dead accurate at home and Rick replied that it has probably taken into account the speed of the plane journey, he secretly thinks Alun hasn’t got it programmed in right. When Rick was on his laptop looking for motels the other night Alun peered over his shoulder and Rick said “Do you like my screen Alun, it’s an ultra high resolution screen”. Now we are in California things are getting more expensive, the prices quoted don’t include the tax.

We set off for Napa and are lead through some road works by a pilot car with a sign on the back “Follow Me”. Oh no, there is now a sign saying 28 miles of windy road, oh no another fairground ride. There were actually some people living there, I certainly wouldn’t like to be so isolated. As Alun was pulling out of a

turnout his bike tipped over and it was quite a job getting it upright again, thank goodness they weren't hurt. Back onto Highway 101 with the much improved roads and the vineyards started to appear as we approached Ukiah. We stopped for petrol just outside Santa Rosa and re-programmed the sat nav to take the more scenic route to the Comfort Inn in Fairfield. You can buy a bucket of 110 octane race fuel for \$49.95. However, the sat navs obviously weren't synchronised and we lost them on the freeway during rush hour. It was a pretty route; the buildings were a lot more upmarket, the verges landscaped and miles and miles of grape vines. Rick had it in his mind to beat the others to the motel and we made it about 10 minutes before them, I got the impression that Alun was trying to do the same. The boys were hot as they had been riding in temperatures of up to 90° but the swimming pool was outside and a bit cold for them. We were going to skip the gins but Pete thinks it is a very civilized drink and he is getting quite expert at cutting up the lemons with his penknife. They had a great meal at Denny's and a few Corona's and spent all the \$80 that I gave them out of the kitty. I wanted to read my book but fell asleep straight away.

Saturday 23 August – 134 miles



Breakfast time is when we check on the Harley tee-shirt of the day. It is a good posing thing when meeting other Harley's fanatics. Robert and Alun haven't quite run out yet as the wife beater, chain saw massacre one hasn't surfaced (the sleeveless, body hugging type), they are both trying to avoid wearing it.

What a good start to the day – wine tasting 10.30 a.m. at The Wooden Valley Winery. Unfortunately, once again 18 year old Robert can only look on and keep check that I am not overdoing it. Never mind he can have a taste later as we bought a few bottles out of the kitty to supplement the gin. As I now have a full signal I phoned my mum to catch up on all the news and sent loads of texts. We took the scenic, windy road US40 Historic Route through Napa and Petaluma to pick up Highway 1 at Olema. It was blue skies, hills and valleys – very nice. Stopped for lunch at Olema and met the Dirty Dogs, a bunch of Californian guys who pose with their Harley's at weekends. They guessed I was in the support vehicle as you don't get many girls riding a Harley in a dress. I loved the lunch, we sat outside and everything was fresh and organic and not too expensive. Although it was sunny there was that autumnal nip in the air. Olema was the epicentre of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.



We drove through avenues of Eucalyptus trees, the roads were still challenging but not as much as when we eventually made Highway 1. There were people on Stinson Beach but most of them were wearing jackets as the weather had become dull and misty. Wild coriander and pampas grass was growing alongside the road and now and again there were those pink iris type flowers. I wish we had a thermometer in the car. We were following Alun, he missed the viewing point for the Golden Gate Bridge so we carried on driving over it and didn't meet up with them until we reached the motel. I am afraid to say that Rick's sat nav let us down badly in San Francisco as we were sent up and down very steep streets that we thought the boys would have great difficulty negotiating. Going up was bad enough but you had to use the brakes all the time on the way down. However, they didn't have to as they were directed straight onto the highway. I got extremely frustrated with Rick's incessant questioning about what the sat nav. The conversation went something like this:

What do you think is wrong with it?

How would I know, I'm not an expert.

Why don't you want to know?

I don't care, I am not interested, I just want to relax, I don't know anything about the programming of these things. We'll get there in the in.

Oh, well I can see you're not interested, I can't believe you are not interested in why it's not sending us this way. I'll get to the bottom of it. It must be programmed for the shortest route rather than the quickest route and so on and so on.

I think what worried him most was that they were going to beat him to the motel.

They did arrived first and then we all had a swim in a very warm pool. Rick paid a visit to the Mexican shop and topped up with crisps, lemons and limes. The boys then decided to wash and polish up their bikes as they were quite embarrassed when they were parked next to the Dirty Dogs bikes. Martin, Peter and his wife Elaine came over from Palo Alto to see us as he has been given the weekend off. It was a case of déjà vu for Martin and Peter, as just like the Route 66 evenings there we were with the drinks, eats and maps etc all set out. It was lovely to see Elaine and have some feminine chat. We went to the carvery across the road. I had a child's portion this time and Pete stuck to his senior one. They were showing an Olympic relay on the TV and Alun and Rick asked a couple of ladies at the bar what it was and they replied "I don't know but they have some sort of wand in their hand".



Sunday 24 August – San Francisco

Weather sunny but a bit chilly – 72 miles



We've had a day off and spent it in San Francisco with Martin, Elaine and Peter. Started off with the sea lions at Pier 39. Had a drink in the Hard Rock Café while the boys got a real buzz out of seeing all the music memorabilia. Robert was getting short of underwear and whilst he and Alun went shopping in Gap we hung around and listened to some blues music.



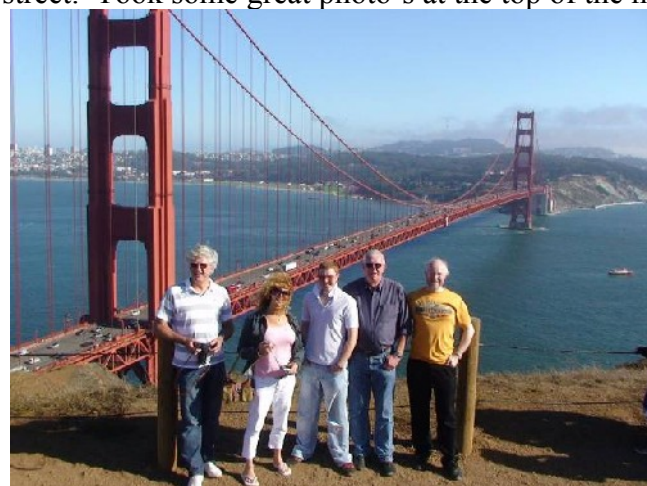
A drunk was lying asleep on the pavement with a sign saying "Please help I need a hooker". The boys had to make the obligatory stop at the Harley Shop for teeshirts. Robert is demonstrating the wife beater/ chain saw massacre tee-shirt while I am trying to persuade Pete to buy some Harley jockey shorts.



While waiting for the cable car we watched a man escape from a straightjacket and chains. The ride in the cable car was great fun but we were squashed in by a family from the Lake District who were travelling around the States in a RV. Stopped for lunch at John's Grill and took the cable car back to Fisherman's Wharf. Everywhere was packed and the atmosphere was jolly. We watched a man sit behind a screen that looked like a hedge and every now and again he would jump up and frighten the life out of passing people. Then we came across a one-man-band who sang "Like a Rolling Stone" – very entertaining.



On the way to The Golden Gate Bridge we negotiated the Lombard Street bends in America's crookedest street. Took some great photo's at the top of the hill by the bridge, but it was very, very windy.



Funny thing is that we all came back much more tired than usual. The boys all went off to the Carvery opposite but I stayed in as I am conscious of my ever growing Harley belly. Would you lie ome help

Monday 25 August – Redwood City - San Luis Obispo

247 miles

They enjoyed the Carvery last night but Rick is suffering from an overload of turkey stroganoff – 2 huge ladles of creamy diced turkey over rice. They have a special attachment on the Guinness pump to help make it float on the lager, the Guinness that is not the turkey sauce.

I did a bit of research for today but although it's interesting it gives me writer's block. I know I shouldn't even think that I come into a writers' category but if I had the confidence of a man I would, actually I got that wrong – I mean if I had Alun's confidence

As we headed towards Half Moon Bay there was a heavy mist in the distance. We passed a place that sold life sized models of horses and dinosaurs etc made out of rusty metal and a few English type nurseries. We're on a tight schedule and didn't have time to stop, I also would have liked to see Hearst Castle but it isn't that sort of holiday. So far we haven't seen any commercial beaches; I mean ones with sunbeds and umbrellas. When we have seen people on the beaches they have been wearing jackets.

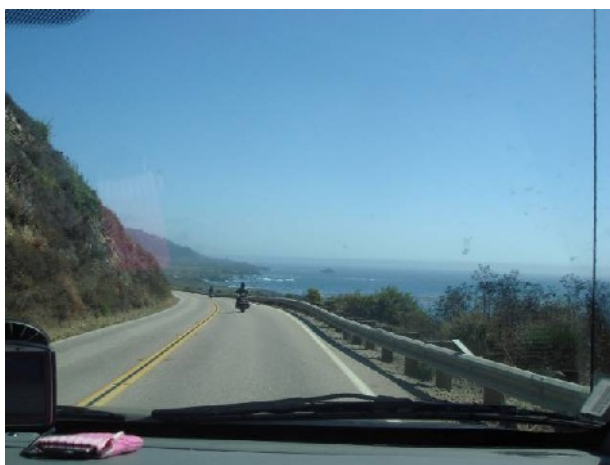


First stop was the 115 ft Pigeon Point Lighthouse that has proved invaluable over the years in keeping mariners safe as there's a lot of sea mist around here. We then moved away from the sea and passed through Davenport that was once a whaling town until it got wiped out by a fire in 1915 and all that was left was the jail. It's a good place to watch the migrating whales. We passed a pumpkin farm and signs for cherries, apricots and nectarines. Artichokes and strawberries are big business and we saw some signs for "you're your own". Being short of time we just passed through Santa Cruz with its historic amusement park where there is a giant Big Dipper and south facing beaches. I am told I didn't miss much as it is a bit like Bognor. As we approached Moss Landing we got a glimpse of the sea but the mist came in again. There were models of whales along the verges. Monterey was much bigger than I thought with lots of sand dunes and tree lined roads. We didn't go right into the town which is a shame as Monterey has an interesting history. In the early 1800's the main industry was hide and tallow and in the 1850's it became part of a Portuguese Whaling Station. Then in the early 1900's the sardine industry came along and at its peak there were 23 canneries along the Monterey Bay until they mysteriously disappeared in 1951. This area is now called Cannery Row and is major tourist attraction. It also has some sea lions but we saw enough of them in San Francisco. Lots of films have been made in and around the Monterey peninsula: Play Misty For Me; Cannery Row; Lassie Come Home, The Graduate, Star Trek IV and loads more. Most towns have some junctions without traffic lights and you have to take it in turns to go, it's quite confusing, most of them are 4 way but we have come across a 5 way.



Carmel was just lovely – no parking meters, no neon or advertising signs, no street lights, all the houses have names instead of numbers and all the trees are registered. There are lots of expensive shops and art galleries. Several ladies were walking their designer dogs. I have taken some photos of the jewellery - huge diamonds. I can't see the point of loads of expensive jewellery as when I see so many chunky diamonds I just imagine rich widows having to pay young men for their company. There were actually some people on the beach but not in swim wear; it was a pretty beach. Rick went into the camera shop to see if they had a tool he could borrow to tighten up his glasses but he was sent to the Tourist Office. Alun came to the rescue as he had a set of precision small screwdrivers. Rick has just accepted that Alun is always one step ahead of him.

We decided to go to Clint Eastward's "Hogs Breath Inn" for lunch as recommended by Vicky and Marco. We sat outside but had to complain about the smell of gas, they rectified this by lighting the gas fire – this is August, what is wrong with the weather. I thought I am going to really enjoy this so I ordered a salad and a glass of red wine. They all looked at me as if I had ordered a whole bottle of champagne to myself. I said I always enjoy lunch much more than the evening meal and anyway I have missed out on a few evening meals. Rick thought I would be ordering a Margarita next. My salad was nice but I needed more so I ordered a burger. It came with chips which was lovely so I ordered another glass of wine. They said "You'll sleep though all the scenery". I'm on holiday, do I care, but actually I do as the scenery is out of this world. They are quite shocked that I have ordered 2 meals for myself and 2 glasses of wine whilst they are sticking to coke as they don't know what the drive is going to be like. Enjoyed the meal but the table was wonky and the staff all Mexican (I think). We had to have a team effort to hold the table down when either I or Pete decided to cut something. Who cares about the Harley belly – well I will later.



Back on the road, we drive through one State Park after another. I don't know what my idea of Utopia is but I think it's not one place, just maybe an isolated beach for a week or two, then a few cities and then some time in the countryside. You think about all these things when you are just sitting in the car for hours on end. I wonder whether we should have done this journey California up to Washington as the scenery is fairly similar, although California's is softer somehow and definitely not so many trees. However, what you see first always has the best impact. We see the dreaded sign that says "Hill curves next 63 miles" what will Pete think about that? The beaches are desolate, beautiful but not easily assessable. As we move inland

there are cows either side of us. There is a stray dog and a cyclist who is on his way to Los Angeles but needs a lift. There is this persistent wind that I really don't like. After we stopped for a wee we opened the windows and put Bob Dylan on loud. We feel a bit like a motor cyclists as we can now feel the temperature and smell, yes smell the Eucalyptus and the sea. The scenery is a bit like the Amalfi coast but without the little houses built into the rocks. We pass through Los Padres National Forest, Gorda and Ragged Point just small places with a motel or two. There were loads of pelicans at San Simeon. Stopped at Cambra to re-fuel. Pete was really enjoying the ride and said that the temperature went up and down with the mist. Alun and Robert love the smell of the strawberries earlier in the day but found the bends today less exciting.



I have missed out a few places but when we arrived at the Comfort Inn in San Luis Obispo there was still time to swim in the freezing cold pool. Had a great meal in the Mexican nearby. I mentioned my writers' cramp and we fixed it with a 60oz Margarita.



Tuesday 26 August - San Luis Obispo to Carlsbad

292 miles

There was still a sea mist or perhaps fog (I am not sure of the difference) as we made our way to Pismo beach. I probably missed quite a bit during the first hour as I had to catch up with the journey info. Pismo is the Indian word for tar and that is the natural asphalt that bubbles through the fissures in the ocean and was used by the Indians for their canoes and to waterproof their baskets. We passed Santa Maria and back into an agricultural zone. There were lots of netted grape vines at Los Alamos. Not sure if I have mentioned it but Alun is a real wine snob and won't touch Californian wine. Alun did a detour to H154 through Cachuma with its beautiful lake that is surrounded by mountains. No one much seems to live there but there some land was fenced off for horses and a golf course – how far must they have to come to play there. We were now back in the Los Padres National Forest. The mountains were very beautiful, I keep using that adjective but they were, and their colours ranged from milky white, then sandy and onto lush green. We were really high up as we approached Santa Barbara, which was covered in mist, where we rejoined the

busy Highway 101. Everywhere is so hilly which causes the temperature to fluctuate. As a result of the Med type climate Santa Barbara is full of flowers and lush greenery. The verges of the highway were planted with shrubs and trees. We didn't go into the city but quite a bit of the Spanish style architecture has been preserved despite the destructive earthquake in 1925.



We picked up the ocean again just outside Summerland but we were back in the sea mist. When we stopped for fuel at Carpinteria it was hot and muggy. It was there that I realised I had forgotten to put my mascara on, I had the eye pencil on which makes it look worse. I tried to get to my make-up bag but it was wedged between everyone's luggage. Oh dear, I will be visiting all the exclusive Californian beach resorts with piggy eyes. Picked up the ocean again outside Mussel Shoals where there is an island with palm trees at the end of a pier. As we approach Ventura there are lots and lots of RV's (Recreational Vehicles or big caravans to us) alongside the beaches. It's the start of the Palm Trees. There are also quite a few surfers in wet suits. We haven't seen much of the Olympics but we have heard that Hamilton came second in the European Grand Prix.



Somehow we missed Ventura but there is a glowing cross high on the hill overlooking the town as a reminder of the city's historical beginning. There have been lots of TV commercials at Point Mugh where the highway winds in and out of the rocks but it is literally falling into the ocean. Next comes Oxnard "Land of Everlasting Summer" which despite most of the land being untillable because of its mountains, deserts and river washes it produces \$180 million in lemons alone, then there are the strawberries, celery, vegetables, nuts and other fruits. \$1 billion from not much more than 100,000 acres.

We made it to the Ventura Harley Davidson shop in Camarillo. Did I want a ride as this would probably be my last chance, we could just go about 5 miles up the road for lunch. Oh well, I had better look keen. I put some trousers underneath my dress and borrowed Robert's leather jacket. Had a bit of trouble doing it up because of my child bearing hips and ample bosom. I also borrowed his boots as they didn't want me to burn my ankles on the exhaust. Then came the helmet followed by my Gucci sunglasses. There wasn't a restaurant for miles, 30 in fact. I held on tight to Alun and he was very good giving me a running commentary through the helmet. I began to relax a bit towards the end but what was Rick doing making us go so fast (75 mph) and making me go 30 miles instead of the 5 he promised. We ended up at the Paradise

Cove in Malibu where we stopped on the Route 66 trip last October. I have to admit I was soaking wet when I got off which is a bit embarrassing as I had been travelling with my legs wrapped round Alun.



We had a lovely relaxing lunch, it was actually sunny and hot but good job we did because then the stress and hassle started. Malibu has had many natural disasters, fires, floods, landslides, earthquakes and the threat of tsunamis. There had been recent fires when we were here last October. The State Beaches are free but quite often you have to pay for car parking. There then followed the **battle of the sat nav's** and we lost. They sent us onto Highway 10 at rush hour and it would have been alright if we just accepted that we would get there in the end. However, Rick and Alun were insisting we try to get to Highway 1 along the coast but somehow missed the exit. There then followed over an hour of complete stress, lots and lots of f words and in and out of different highways. It was so busy that it was difficult to even get on the highway let alone get off. I was very worried for Pete as I know he hates Los Angeles and this was it at its worse. We eventually gave up and decided to go it alone and somehow got back on Highway 1 at Seal Beach where there was a Naval Weapons Station with part of it surrounded by a moat. We then got lost and found ourselves in Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve with its exclusive houses and landscaped gardens. It was here that Rick had a brainwave and changed the sat nav profiles from Fastest Route to Shortest Route. There were quite a few people on the beach at Bolsa Chica even though it was 6pm and there were loads of RV's. Going towards Huntington Beach there was an oil rig out to sea.



Newport, Crystal Cove, Emerald Bay and Laguna Beach are all tourist resorts, one resort leads into another. Newport is a welcome relief after leaving the nightmare freeways of Los Angeles. This is very obviously an affluent area and you need to be stinking rich or a student to live in Laguna Beach which attracts lots of artists. There is a very impressive marina in Newport that follows through to Balboa Marina with loads of huge yachts. Crystal Cove and Emerald Bay appear more residential and suited to retirees. This is a real holiday resort area with lovely beaches.



Highway 1 terminated at Dana Point where we took Interstate 5 to our motel passing a nuclear power station on the way. Back to the mountains sloping towards the sea. You don't see much on the Freeways but outside of rush hour they are fast and even though the speed limit was 65 mph we and others were doing 80 mph at times.

I don't know how it happened but we arrived at the motel just after the others as they had decided to take the Freeway too. It was going to be my no drinking day but we stopped to buy some more gin as we were sure that Alun and Pete would need it. They did !!!! The chap in reception was having hassle with a family that offered to pay \$10 extra for a better room. Then after completing all the paperwork decided that even if they had to pay \$500 extra they wanted the best room in the hotel as they were also in the hotel business and knew what goes on. To cut a long story short the hotel said they didn't want their business. I sent the boys off for a meal, Rick is back and said they had a good time but have no details yet as he is snoring away. It is just a short distance way. Ord hard, play hard) so, so true.



Wednesday 27 August – Carlsbad – Tijuana, Mexico – Manhattan Beach 189 miles

They had a good time last night, they always get freebees when I am not with them. They got to the restaurant just before closing time, the food was good, they ordered 3 beers but he brought 4 and then he gave them all a pudding.



Zoomed down the highway to San Diego and caught the bus to Tijuana just over the border in Mexico. The air conditioning on the bus consisted of a window that blew open every time we turned right. The bus stops at a doorway to a shopping mall – there is no escape and they didn't even bother to look at our passports. I think we were early and the only tourists in town, so we were completely at the mercy of all the souvenir shopkeepers. Every other shop was a Pharmacia and Alun and Rob were offered Ecstasy and Viagra and for some reason they kept offering Robert cigars. You can have your photograph taken next to a donkey that has been made to look like a zebra. First stop was the tee-shirts where several fake Harley ones were purchased. Robert was fascinated by all the girlie clubs, I think it is demeaning. To escape all the sellers we had an early lunch.



Robert is 18 and in Mexico he could drink whatever he liked, so he started with beer followed by a margarita and then a shot of tequila. Then the best bit of all, memories of my 50th birthday in Venice came flooding back, as the travelling musicians did their best to entertain us. It was lovely. So lovely, I could hear it all again and again – had to leave them a huge tip.



Then Robert bought a huge Mexican sombrero and Alun bought the fake leather Harley one – don't they look good.



Great lunch and then back on the bus to cross the border back to USA. Luckily the bus had a priority lane as the queue for cars was about a mile long to go through the border inspection procedures. Zoomed up the highway to our motel in Manhattan Beach. We haven't had time for TV but Alun and Rob are addicted to "Cash Cab". It works like this: You get in a cab and the cabbie says "This is a cash cab, where are you going and do you want to take part? First question is worth \$25 and if you can't answer it you can phone a friend or stop someone in the Street. The money goes up with each question plus a free ride. 3 wrong answers then the game is over or if you are doing well the last question is double or nothing. Looked at the beach but opted for a swim in the heated hotel pool.



Made a good job of drinking up all our left overs and had our last meal in a Hawaiian Restaurant, we joined in the beer tasting and buffet - very nice.

We have driven 1964 miles and spent £192 (\$345) on petrol giving us approximately 29 miles to the gallon. Twelve nights accommodation \$1376 that includes breakfast cost £764 which works out at £63.70 a night. We have seen so much since the rain in Seattle, coastal lowlands, bridges, lakes, rivers, craggy mountains, cliffs, canyons, valleys, narrow winding roads, 8 lane highways, trees, trees and more trees, spectacular sea and landscapes, sandy beaches, vines, fields of vegetables, marinas full of expensive yachts, holiday resorts, We have eaten in many different places and experienced Chinese, Mexican, Italian, Hawaiian and all American food. We have stayed in 10 different motels most of them being Comfort Inns and had to work out how to use the varying taps and showers in each. The weather at the beginning was very iffy, what with the rain and wind but it has improved considerably as we have moved south.

We all agree that the day with Martin, Elaine and Peter in San Francisco was the best and we all loved the cable car but we also enjoyed our day in Seattle and Mexico was great fun. Seeing the signs that said "Hill

curves for next 63 miles” was worrying but nothing as frustrating and exhausting as the nightmare on the Los Angeles Freeways. It would have been nice to have had time to visit a few museums and other tourist attractions but we have seen so much and more importantly experienced a fine camaraderie between us. We have to say a “thank you” to our sat nav’s because even though we fell out with them quite a lot they still did a good job.

I am feeling and looking so fat that I’m not going to touch any alcohol for ages and live on salads and exercise every day until I get back into shape.



This is my favourite photo of Peter, absolutely soaked



It's goodbye from all of us, sorry Elaine I don't have one with you included but hopefully someone will have one.