

## Trip 2 – Episode # 37 – The Historic Pacific Coast Highway

After Morro Bay, we were headed north, along the Pacific Coast Highway and eventually to San Francisco.

We had hoped we'd be able to stop for a tour of Hearst Castle.



But apparently there's been a lot of rain damage to the steep road up to the castle, so it's closed until they've repaired it.

This was the best shot I could get from the highway. Maybe next time....



However, just past the castle, I noticed some unusual animals grazing in the fields. Could they be zebras?? And it suddenly occurred to me that they were probably Hearst zebras dining on San Simeon grass.



Throughout our trip, I've been on the lookout for wildlife. But I've been mostly disappointed. Despite dozens of signs warning us to be on the lookout for deer, elk, antelope, moose, goats, sheep, open range cows, and wild donkeys, we had seen none.

So, when we saw a sign that said "Elephant Seals", we were skeptical. But we turned off the highway toward the beach just to see, certain that we would once again be fooled.

For a change, the advertising proved to be true.

By now, I hope most of you have viewed the video that Jim put together starring the Elephant Seals. (If you haven't, stop reading this *right now* and go look at the video - it'll make your day, I promise.)

The thing about these seals is that when you take still photos, for the most part, they look like a bunch of bloated carcasses strewn across the beach. It looks like an environmental tragedy.



But when you see video, you realize how much is going on. And it's hilarious! Jim's video captures much of it. But I got a few stills that caught some action and confirmed that they were actually very much alive.





The site was beautifully laid out, so people could move along the walkway, and get close to the seals without bothering them.





Definitely one of the best spots for watching wildlife do what they do, without interfering with them. I didn't see a single kid trying to feed these seals Doritos.



After the elephant seals, we entered Big Sur country, where the ocean views were just magnificent. Fortunately, the road, which had been washed out by rain and mudslides, just a year ago, had been almost totally repaired, so we were able to drive the entire trip along the coast. You can see the road rounding bend after bend ahead of us.



I tried snapping photos of the ocean views from the passenger side, through the front windshield or through Jim's window when I could, and some of them turned out okay.







But when there were lookout points, we stopped as often as we could. The views were just too incredible not to stop and let our jaws drop for a while.





Choosing which photos to include was like picking a favourite child.





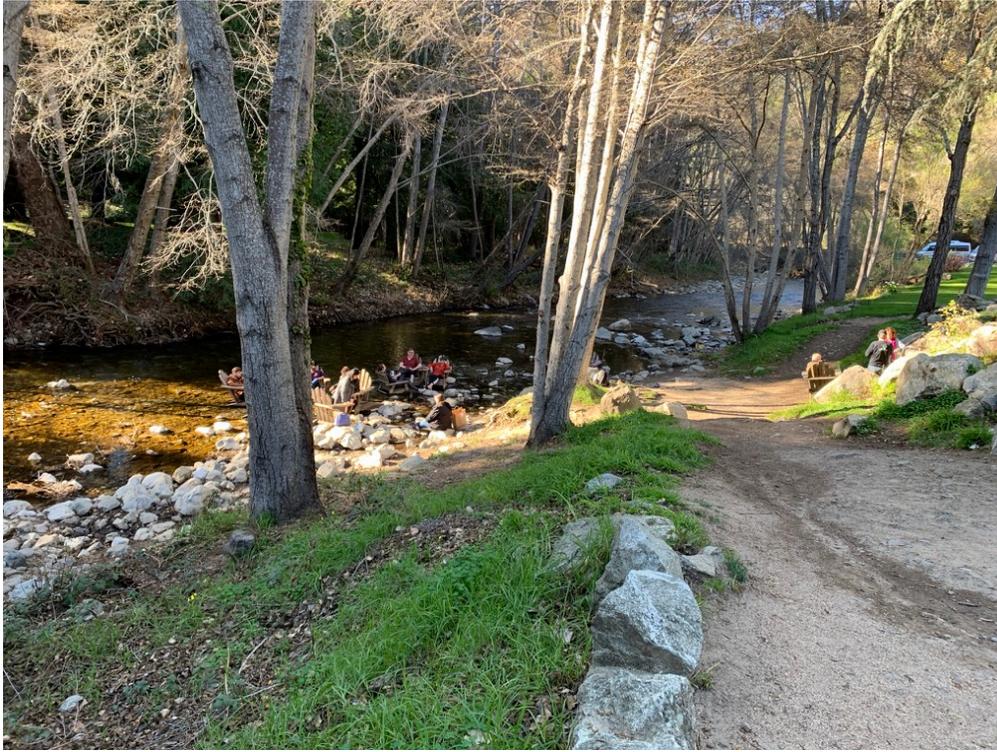
After some time, the road turned inland and up, and we found ourselves in the town of Big Sur, which, to our surprise (having spent no time studying the actual map) was nowhere near the coast.

In fact, the tiny town of Big Sur is nestled in a forest, right by a lovely river, which turned out to be Big Sur River. (Who knew there was a Big Sur River??) There was definitely a hippie feel about the place, and after all the drama of the Pacific coast, it was pleasant to lunch by the river and let our hearts stop racing.





Other travellers seemed to be enjoying this peaceful spot by the river as well. (Jim took some video of the river, which is attached below.)



And we even got visits from some Steller's Jays, which we had never seen before.



As Jim points out, it was a delicious lunch. And a nice break between breathtaking views.



We got back on the road and saw more of the Pacific coast before arriving in Monterey.



We hadn't booked a place, hoping we might find a spot to boondock by the ocean, which we gathered, from our different apps was possible. But after looking around a bit and finding nothing, we opted for Veterans' Memorial Park, up in the hills.

It was a very nice, forested park available for very little money, a nice peaceful overnight stay ... until the morning when Reveille blared over the PA system at 7:00!

Apparently that's done in all Veterans' Memorial Parks. Surprise!

In the morning, freshly awakened, we continued our journey up the Pacific Coast, to our next destination.



San Francisco Here We Come!