

# The Ultimate California Road Trip

BY KAREN VILLALPANDO

part 2

We began our trip three days prior, traveling from Los Angeles to Santa Barbara, through Lompoc and Guadalupe, and finally to Pismo Beach. Here is the second leg of our journey on the Ultimate California Road Trip.

We woke early the next morning in Pismo, anxious to get on the road. We had many miles to travel on day four and the girls couldn't wait to take in more of the California coastline. Our final destination for the day would be Monterey, but the unknown stops along the way are what intrigued us most.

It was a beautiful Saturday morning, with many cyclists sharing the road with us. We headed north from Pismo, via Highway 101, and exited at Los Osos Road. We traveled about 10 miles to the town of Los Osos, through Baywood Park and Morro Bay where we reconnected with Highway 1. We then arrived in the charming town of Cayucos. Main Street resembled a stagecoach stop with a beachy feel. Coffee shops and surf shops shared the retail space with restaurants and realty offices. We popped into a popular café for coffee and scones, then walked around to see what else we could discover. To our delight, we followed our noses to Ruddell's Smokehouse. Owner Jim Ruddell was stoking the fire, and although he hadn't officially opened for the day, let us come in and sample the albacore he had just pulled from the smoker. Smoked salmon is common, but this was my first nibble of smoked albacore. The sweet and smoky flavor of the fish made me only want more, so we purchased a nice piece to enjoy for a picnic later in the day. "Smoker Jim" also smokes oysters, chicken, pork loin and yellowtail. The smoker was loaded with tuna that morning, and his wife and daughter were cooking right beside him. The folks in Cayucos were certainly friendly, and the local real estate office was quick to point out the well-priced beach homes, and the lack of traffic. I would like to visit Cayucos again and stay a while, but with miles to go before we sleep, we headed back to the SUV.



photo by Michael Villalpando

Ruddell's Smokehouse in Cayucos smokes up some of the tastiest albacore and yellowtail. From left, Rebecca, Karen and Emily savored every bite.

We've always wanted to see Hearst Castle, but knew it would be crowded on a summer Saturday, so "We'll just drive by," we told the kids. Driving up the winding road to the castle, we realized how naive we were. There's no driving to the castle – let alone driving by. The parking lot was a sea of cars with hundreds of camera-toting sightseers waiting for the next shuttle bus. We pointed to a speck on the hill that was the castle and made a sharp U-turn for Highway 1. Perhaps another time, girls.

During the ride we took turns telling stories, one about a trip 20 years ago to Cambria when we were dating; others were funny anecdotes about the girls when they were toddlers. Our stories often would be interrupted with oohs and ahhs, because at every bend in the road, we were amazed by one gorgeous view after another. How lucky are we to live in this beautiful state!

The coastline became interspersed with spectacular California redwoods, as we made our way into Big Sur. We had lunch reservations at the Post Ranch Inn at Big Sur, a resort well known for its quiet and secluded surroundings. With only 30 rustic, yet luxurious guest rooms, the resort is designed with total privacy in mind. Due to the reclusive nature of the property, families with children under 18 are not welcome. While we were there, the dining room was under renovation, and we had lunch in a temporary, yet well-appointed structure. While management had taken pains to keep the ambience in the makeshift restaurant highbrow and free of pesky children, the clientele we saw were poorly dressed twentysomethings and doddering millionaires. It wasn't our cup of tea. With Stone Henge-like sculptures looming in the brown grass, we got an eerie feeling driving in and out of the resort. While Conde Nast Traveler has rated the Post Ranch Inn as one of the Top Destinations of the world, it is for a select group who desire complete isolation. For me, Big Sur is too beautiful and romantic to hibernate there.

Moving on, we arrived in Monterey ready to relax. We checked into the Hyatt Regency Monterey, and were escorted to a newly renovated room. Directly behind the hotel was a 100-year-old golf course, beckoning Michael to the first tee. After the six-hour car ride, a little separation would do us good, so I found

the walking trails and the girls found the remote to the 42" plasma TV – teenagers! The golf course is the Pebble Beach-owned Del Monte Golf Course, an 18-hole, championship course, famous for its small, well-protected greens and narrow, tree-lined fairways. It is ranked by Golf Digest in the top five among American courses, 100 years and older. Michael thoroughly enjoyed his round, calling it one of the most beautiful and perfectly manicured courses he has ever played.



photo courtesy of Ritz-Carlton, Half Moon Bay

Set atop an ocean bluff, the Ritz-Carlton, Half Moon Bay, is a magnificent 19th century style luxury resort overlooking 50 miles of rugged California coastline.

The hotel is undergoing a \$40 million renovation, including updated guest rooms and a spa. The lobby and dining room have already been completed with dark and light woods, modern lighting, and an inviting fireplace lounge.

The new restaurant, TusCA, combines the cuisine of Tuscany with the freshest California ingredients with terrific results. Dishes like the branzino, an Italian sea bass, and the pappardelle with braised ox tail were tremendous. A great wine list at reasonable prices accompanies the menu. The staff was friendly and attentive, making for a very pleasurable dining experience.

Strolling through Cannery Row the next morning reminded the girls of New Orleans (pre-Katrina). We snatched up a couple of souvenirs and promptly returned to our familiar route of Highway 1. We weren't on the road long when we came around a bend with 25-30 brightly colored kite surfers catching the waves. What a spectacular sight! With a cerulean blue sky as a backdrop, the parachute-style kites were "boosting major air" – to translate, the surfers were being lifted 10-20 feet into the air before splashing down into the ocean. We watched



photo courtesy of Hyatt Regency Monterey

The new fireplace lounge at the recently renovated Hyatt Regency Monterey is a relaxing place to enjoy cocktails overlooking the 100-year-old Del Monte Golf Course.

these flying daredevils for about 15 minutes before retreating to our warm and wind-protected car.

We approached our final destination, Half Moon Bay, and felt a sense of accomplishment. We took five days to travel nearly 600 miles, all on Highway 1, and we still had two days to enjoy the Bay area, specifically the Ritz-Carlton, Half Moon Bay. Set on the bluffs overlooking the Pacific Ocean, the 19th century-style grand hotel features beachside lodging in 261 guestrooms. The grand marble entrance and top drawer service lets you know right away you'll be treated to Ritz-Carlton hospitality.

Opened in 2003, the Ritz-Carlton, Half Moon Bay has a luxurious spa, 36-hole ocean-front golf course, two exceptional dining restaurants, an outdoor whirlpool with adjacent firepot, and plenty of Adirondack chairs to watch the waves roll in. While Michael hit the links, the girls retreated to the spa for massages and beauty treatments. The men's and women's lounges have their own whirlpools and tsunami showers, while a candlelit, co-ed, Roman mineral bath offers an opportunity to share time with your spouse. Every amenity is at your fingertips, be it high-end beauty products, salon treatments or an extensive spa menu.

As in most Ritz-Carltons, a club level is available, offering breakfast, afternoon tea, and evening cocktails and hors d'oeuvres. With picturesque views of the ocean and the 18th hole, it was easy to relax here and watch golfers approach the final green with the roaring waves in the background.

The hotel offers the use of a Mercedes Benz 500 S class, or

the convertible model, as part of a special package available. After driving a Chevy Trailblazer for the last five days, a brand new Mercedes could be fun. It was! In fact, we saved the best adventure for last. We had scheduled a tour of a goat cheese farm about 14 miles down the road, and pulled up. A tall, slender woman came out to greet us by the name of Dee Harley. Turns out, she's the goat farmer, and owner of Harley Farms cheese. This delightfully charming, English woman explained she was a bit jet-lagged, having just returned the evening before from a week-end in New York. She meets her British girl friends there, NYC being a halfway point between England and California. They took in a Broadway show, dined at a happening restaurant and

snapped! Here she is back in California, wading through a heard of goats on a farm in Pescadero.

As we walked out to the middle of the pasture, all I could think of was "Boy, I'm glad I didn't wear heels," but as Harley continued her story, we all became enthralled with her, and her 200 goats. They nuzzled against us as Dee explained she and her husband purchased the farm about 16 years ago. Formerly a dairy farm, it had sat dormant for nearly 50 years, and Dee longed to bring it back to life. She bought her first six goats a few years later, and has since grown the herd into 200, all from the same six. She has birthed them, fed them and nurtured them, treating these kids like family. The goats are milked twice daily, each goat rendering a gallon of milk per day, which results in 1 pound of cheese. Harley has been making goat cheese for nine years now, including the familiar goat log,

goat feta, and incredibly delicious goat ricotta. She has worked diligently to re-use whatever they can on the farm, from recycling the water used to pasteurize the goat's milk, to fertilizing the pasture with reclaimed water from the plant. The smell is slightly unpleasant, but the goats love the grass fortified with the nutrients from the leftover whey. To borrow from the slogan "Happy cows make great cheese" these are definitely happy goats, and the cheese? Outstanding.

The Harley's recently opened a cheese tasting room in what used to be part of the farmhouse, a 1910 building, with exposed beams, and plenty of great

cheese for tasting and purchasing. We left with a nice collection including the goat cheese with herbs in olive oil, and the cheese with edible fresh flowers. Go to their website at [www.harleyfarms.com](http://www.harleyfarms.com) to place

an order, or to schedule a tour.

Before leaving, Dee took us up to the hayloft, which serves as the Pescadero town meeting

see Road Trippin' page 20

**With a cerulean blue sky as a backdrop, the parachute-style kites were "boosting major air..."**



photo by Emily Villalpando

More than 25 kite surfers lit up the sky with their colorful chutes making for a spectacular photo opportunity.



photo by Karen Villalpando

Harley Farms owner Dee Harley hangs out with some of her 200 goats.

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photo by Emily Villalpando

Monterey's Cannery Row is a popular night life spot and tourist destination with plenty of shops, restaurants and former canneries to wander through.

## Road Trippin' Up California's Coast

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place, the tutoring room for Dee's son Ben and his friends, and a private dining room. An enormous fallen tree, that was causing the creek to flood the town, was hauled to the farm where it had since been carved into a magnificent, less-than-straight dining table. Chairs were made from the limbs. With the sunlight pouring into the loft, you can't imagine a more perfect setting. It was peaceful, yet full of life, and we all felt very comfortable there. You meet many people as you go through life, and some touch you in a special way. Dee Harley, Farmer of the Year, is one of those persons. Cruising back to the Ritz-Carlton, we quietly reflected on our two-hour visit, and counted ourselves as lucky to have met her.

**I would say it was our best vacation yet, except that I still have three summers left until my oldest goes off to college. I am savoring every moment.**

The final night of our Ultimate California Road Trip would be spent having the ultimate meal in Navio, the dining room at the Ritz-Carlton. Chef de cuisine Aaron Zimmer prepares a daily menu using the freshest catch from nearby Princeton Harbor, such as local butterfish. Only the finest ingredients like Alaskan halibut, Maine lobster, Hudson Valley foie gras and Creekstone Farms beef make it on Zimmer's menu. Dishes are presented with Ritz-Carlton flair, and with special touches. The Maine lobster salad arrives with vanilla braised endive; the tenderloin is accompanied with Yukon Gold potatoes confit and basil sauce; and the seared scallops is presented with Meyer lemon preserves. The extra attention to detail and finesse is noticed and appreciated by diners.

A knowledgeable young sommelier guided us through the extensive wine list, selecting a middle-priced cabernet sauvignon that paired well with our dishes. Just as she was opening the wine, the sun, which had

been hiding behind clouds for the duration of our stay, peeked through and gave us a picture-perfect sunset.

We recapped our trip over dinner, and recalled our favorite moments. The Ultimate California road trip would stay on our minds for weeks to come. The time spent together was virtually drama-free, which isn't always the case with two teenage girls. What nice memories to conjure up when were in the doldrums and stress of midterms and deadlines. I would say it was our best vacation yet, except that I still have three summers left until my oldest goes off to college. I am savoring every moment.

The beauty of this road trip was, the next morning we drove our rented SUV to San Jose airport, hopped aboard a flight to Burbank, picked up our car and we were home by mid afternoon. Now that's the way to go!

Ruddell's Smokehouse: From Highway 1 (north or south) take the Cayucos Dr. exit. We're one block south of the Cayucos pier, on the ocean front, at the end of the boardwalk; 101 D Street, Cayucos, CA 93430; (805)995.5028www.smokerjim.com.

Post Ranch Inn is located on the Big Sur Coast, between San Luis Obispo and Monterey - off of Highway 1, just 30 miles south of Carmel, California. (800) 527-2200; www.postranchinn.com.

Hyatt Regency Monterey: 1 Old Golf Course Road, Monterey, CA 93940; (831) 372-1234; www.monterey.hyatt.com

Ritz-Carlton, Half Moon Bay: One Miramontes Point Road, Half Moon Bay, California 94019; (650) 712-7000; www.ritzcarlton.com/HalfMoonBay

Harley Farms: 205 North Street, PO Box 173, Pescadero, CA 94060; (650)879-0480; www.harleyfarms.com

### Newsday Crossword

COLOR COMMENTARY by Shirley Soloway  
Edited by Stanley Newman  
www.stanwords.com

- ACROSS**
- 1 Loud noise
  - 5 Superficial shine
  - 10 Nautical mop
  - 14 A great distance
  - 15 Devilfish
  - 16 "Goodness!"
  - 17 Fast-moving object
  - 19 Edeance
  - 20 Address Allen
  - 21 Dew Stop playwright
  - 22 Cash spewing device
  - 23 Carry (sing OK)
  - 24 Suffix for block
  - 26 Coast
  - 26 Finest possible
  - 28 Flavor enhancer
  - 30 Eat in the evening
  - 33 Rules of Order guy
  - 36 Note the differences between
  - 38 Kans. neighbor
  - 39 Nasal apparatus
  - 41 Bom Free lioness
  - 42 Still shrink-wrapped
  - 44 Sound-system controls
  - 46 Cul-de-
  - 47 Infomercials, for example
  - 48 Mongrels
  - 49 Answer sheet
  - 51 Argentine sunl
  - 53 Internet commerce
  - 57 Research centers
  - 59 Atomic income
  - 60 Household help
  - 61 Summer snack
  - 62 Drain
  - 64 Singer Fitzgerald
  - 65 Columbus' hometown
  - 66 Limerick's land
  - 67 Customs payment
  - 68 Virtuous one
  - 69 Spendsters of yore
  - 5 DDC clock setting
  - 6 Cowpoke's catcher
  - 7 Without letup
  - 8 Rose in Gypsy, o.g.
  - 9 Benefit
  - 10 Alternative power
  - 11 January retail event
  - 12 Two-band
  - 13 Tourney passes
  - 18 Mean look
  - 25 Performer's rep.
  - 27 Rise
  - 29 Major mess
  - 31 Sputnik launcher
  - 32 Bake sale sponsors
  - 33 Steals from
  - 34 Cajun cookery ingredient
  - 35 Dojo designation
  - 36 Female seal
  - 37 Idaho and Iowa, in '04
  - 40 Parkway stop
  - 43 Calendar box
  - 45 Battleground
  - 48 Steep-sided valley
  - 60 Colonial piece
  - 52 Carri speaker
  - 54 Three against
  - 55 Not moving
  - 56 Ancient string
  - 57 Wasn't candid
  - 60 Rights org.
  - 59 Dairy frozen
  - 63 Fast wiping place

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ANSWERS ON PAGE 26



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