

Trip 2 – Episode #28 – Finally We’re in California!

Technically, we were in California when we stayed at the Riverside RV campground in Winterhaven, just across the border from Yuma, Arizona. But we didn’t really feel like we were in California. We still felt like we were in the desert.

But we’d never seen anything quite like the dunes we drove through just outside Winterhaven. Literally mountains of sand.



From very sandy dunes, we moved on to very stony mountains. We'd never felt more like we were in the desert.



But then suddenly this....



And then, confirmation that we were finally in California. Beaches *and* freeways!



Our first stop was San Diego, which as everyone knows is a beautiful city. Several friends sent us suggestions of what we should see and places we could go. And we did almost none of them!

That was partly because of COVID, and our attempts to stay away from crowds, especially indoor crowds. And it was partly because, after travelling for so long, you just get tired. And the thought of running around seeing as much as possible just sounds too exhausting.

Finding a beautiful spot to sit and stare at seems good enough.

We found a that in a campground, right on the water, in Mission Bay.



We were very close to a nice little beach.



We had friendly neighbours checking in on us just in case we dropped any food.



The beautiful flowers around the campground reminded me how little colour we'd seen in the desert. We know that in the spring, there are colourful flowers in the desert but when we drove through them, things were quite monochromatic. Seeing the flowers in the campground gave me the same rush as seeing crocuses opening up after the winter.



There were ducks and other waterfowl.



And children feeding them, despite strict rules about not feeding wildlife.



We drove up to Pacific Beach and walked the beach on one of the days when the waves were especially high because of the tsunami.





There's a great pier there, which actually has hotel rooms on it.





And a sink for cleaning the fish that you catch, which this guy is clearly hoping someone will do soon.



We were in San Diego for four nights and had four gorgeous sunsets.





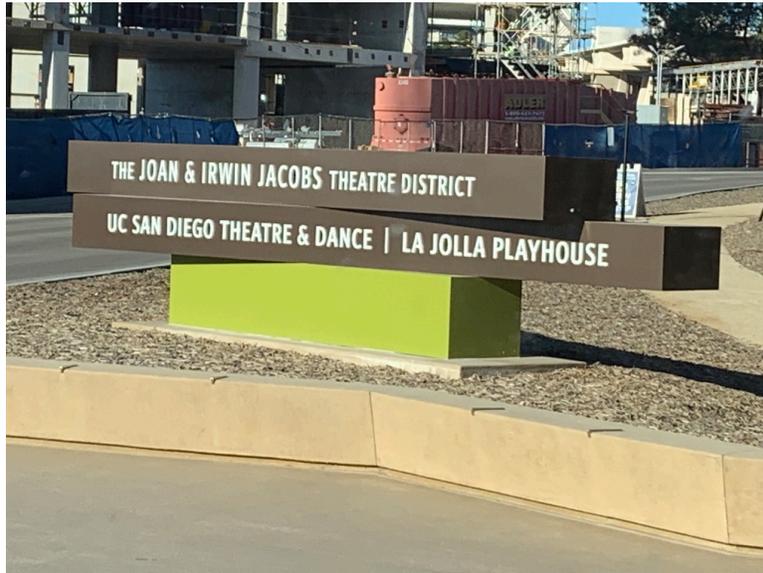
We found the best dog park I've ever seen. It went on forever, was fenced and had water. What more could a dog or dog owner want?



This was as close as we got to Sea World. And that was okay.

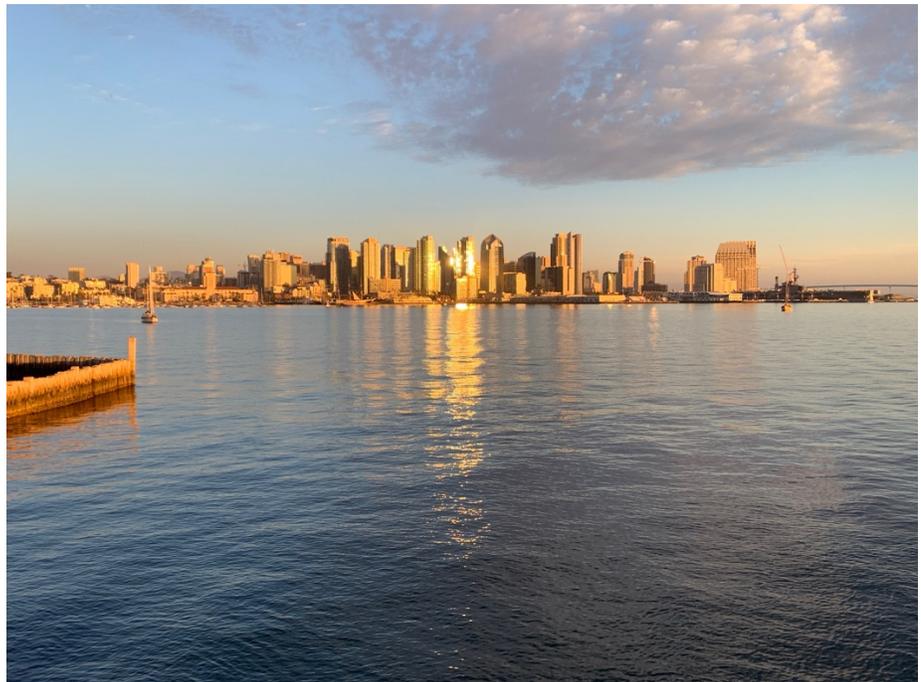


We would love to have seen some theatre – especially at the La Jolla Playhouse, which we drove up to, but because of COVID there was nothing to see.



We listened to Jim’s friend Jeffrey Huard and had a lovely dinner at a restaurant called C-Level, where Jim had their signature drink – which doubled as a seafood appetizer. We had a tasty meal and we also got some great views of the city.





And finally, and most importantly, we got to spend time over two days with my goddaughter, Helen Koules Close, along with her husband Randy, her mother Rena (whom I've known since I was a kid), her delightful brother Peter and her adorably precocious son Isaiah.



So although we didn't do most of the things people told us we should do in San Diego, it was a thoroughly enjoyable four days.

And we were happy to be near the ocean again.



After leaving San Diego, we got onto the highway that we knew we'd be seeing a lot of over the next couple of weeks.



But we only stayed on it for a while, because we had made plans to stay overnight at a Harvest Host winery inland for one night. Harvest Host is an organization of vineyards, ranches, golf courses and historic sites that allow RVers to stay overnight for free.

The trip to the winery, through Rancho Santa Fe was lush and picturesque.





The Belle Marie winery in the hills near Escondido was unusual in that there were no actual vineyards there. They bring in their grapes from other vineyards throughout California and makes the wines on this hillside spot.



But the site where they make their wines is a former citrus grove and they still have many of the orange, lemon, lime and tangerine trees on the property.



We were encouraged to pick whatever we wanted and we didn't let them down. We also bought some of their wines as a thank you for a lovely overnight stay.



Now we were ready for our next destination: Los Angeles, where adventure awaited!

