

Trip 2 – Episode #42 – Coasting South

Sadly, Sonoma and Wine Country would be the farthest north we would travel in Charles. Though we would love to have continued up the coast to the magnificent Redwood National Park and beyond into Oregon and Washington, the timing just wasn't on our side, in more ways than one. We knew this was territory we'd enjoy exploring more during the warmer seasons. And we also knew we had only a limited amount of time to get back to Toronto – and lots of planned stops along the way back.

So, we turned Charles south and headed back down the Pacific Coast – knowing that these would be our last views of the Pacific for some time.

Which means these will be *your* last views of our last views of the Pacific Coast. So be prepared – there are a lot of them!

Our first stop was a campground in Marina Dunes, just north of Monterey. And they weren't kidding about the dunes! It was a long, sandy walk to the shore.





Holding the sand down were acres of these blooming cactus flowers, which were so vibrant against the green and the sand.





And at the end of our walk, a huge, empty, sandy beach.



And more dunes. As far as we could see. Either way.



The next day, we drove through Monterey, spending a bit more time than we did on the way north, but still not enough to really understand or fully appreciate what the town had to offer.



That was unfortunate, because it looked great. It was especially fun to drive through the Fisherman's Wharf area ...





And the famous Cannery Row.





It's definitely a place we'd like to go back to and stay for a while.

But we weren't prepared for what we'd discover as we continued to Pacific Grove, just south of Monterey.



As we drove along Ocean View Boulevard, there were beautiful Victorian houses on one side, and many of them caught my eye – as did the gorgeous pines that lined the yards and walkways.







But on the other side? That's where the real show was! The town had wisely created parkland and paths along the waterfront.



And as soon as there was a place, we pulled off and stood in awe for a long time.



As you can imagine, I took dozens of photos, but unfortunately they don't really do it justice. I'm including a few that came close. And Jim is planning on putting together another sea video, and we'll post it as soon as it's done. That will be a much more accurate representation of how thrilling it was.







A kind couple offered to take our photo in front of all the action (after I'd done it for them).



And then we tore ourselves away from that spot and continued along the coast, feeling such envy for the people who live in this house, and get to see this view every day.



And for the locals who don't have to travel thousands of miles to walk this path.



Of course, the amazing views continued as we drove south, and this time I was on the right side of Charles to snap shots without begging Jim to pull over. Well, not *too* often.





It didn't matter that we'd probably seen all these views on our trip north. As each curve revealed a new vista, it was just as breathtaking.











It was around here that we discovered two things: 1: We were low on diesel, and 2: None of the very few gas stations along this route sold diesel.

We looked at the dashboard readout that reported how many kms we could drive before we ran out of fuel, and saw that the number went up and down, depending on whether we were going down or up a hill.

Then we looked at the road ahead. We knew we had to get to Cambria, where there was diesel, which was over 70 km away. We hoped there were more downhill roads than uphill.



Suddenly the Pacific Coast Highway was a nail-biter for a totally different reason. The drama out the window was competing with the drama on the instrument panel.

I didn't dare suggest we stop for me to get more photos. I just snapped things out the window, which was still amazing.





We passed our friends the elephant seals, but didn't stop to say hello.



Finally, we made it to Cambria with 44 km to spare (depending on the incline)...



... and feeling like a couple of “nitt wits” for not filling up before we left. But at least we knew there was a ridge for us! And we had enough fuel to get there!



Filled with relief, and admiration for Charles, we carried on, with a tankful of fuel and a three-night reservation at Morro Bay, one of our favourite spots.

The sky seemed
to be celebrating
our good fortune.



And we settled
in at Morro Bay.



Whew!