
Stop 37. Six Rivers

Arrival datetime: Saturday, June 15, 3:00PM
Sites visited: Redwood State Parks, Six Rivers National Forest
Accommodations: Peter's Creek Lodge
States traveled: California

We spent the morning in Patrick's Point State Park. There were several hiking trails in and about sea stacks. The sea stacks started a quarter mile inshore and continued a mile or so into the Pacific. We could see a few seals popping their heads above the surface, and lots of birds. We were right on the edge of the Pacific, stone walkways carved out of the rocky crags allowed us to look directly down at waves crashing into the black pointy rocks along the shore.



View from Patrick's Point.

We found a place where we could walk down to the beach. It was Agate Beach, and we spent the next few hours looking for agates. First we had to stop a professional looking rock collector and ask him what an agate was. He was wearing rubber boots and carrying a hoe, with which he combed the pebbly sand brought in with new waves. He reached

into his pocket and pulled out a handful of translucent stones, lined or framed with, opaque white, orange, or other deep dark colors.

We walked as far as a salt-water lagoon, at least a couple miles past the beach. We found only one translucent rock. Later in a gift shop, we learned that we had passed several perfect agate specimens that did not happen to be translucent, but at the time we were bound by the taste of our randomly chosen consultant. Luckily, we also forced ourselves to look up once and a while and see the views. To the south, the black-green treetops of the Redwoods were barely visible under tick clouds of fog. To the north were orange cliffs with green tops, followed by a sea stack shaped like a spinnaker in full sail, coated in the right places with bird dung to color the sail appropriately white. To the east were sandy cliffs. To the west, water. The walk was hot and difficult in the wet sand, but we happily savored our last day on the Pacific coast.

We stopped for lunch at a touristy looking shop housed in a red barn. There was a gift shop, a museum, a RV Park, an Elk farm and a restaurant. The restaurant advertised a new chef. He was the only one working in the place and he seemed to fresh off the boat from France. We



Agate Beach.

ordered a “snapper sandwich” and it came pastry wrapped with a rich cream sauce. Delicious. We browsed the gift shop, and from there had a slice of fresh baked boysenberry pie, which also prepared by the chef. Again, delicious.

On our way into the Redwood Forest, we stopped to pick up a manzanita lipstick holder we had commissioned from an Orick chainsaw art company the day before. It was a very thick foot-long piece of manzanita trunk split in half, red wood with lighter pinkish grain. Twelve lipstick-sized holes were drilled into it and it was highly polished. We examined their redwood boxes, but they were half again the price of those we had seen at the red barn, so decided not to buy any.

We popped off the major highway to experience the Newton B. Drury Scenic Byway. It was like one of our walks through the Redwood Groves except that we were driving. We stopped at the “Big Tree” for a more personal encounter with the Redwoods. We saw a banana slug a yellow, shell-less, snail-like creature that supposedly helped the big trees rid themselves of harmful fungus. The trees again impressed us with their hugeness and we took lots of pictures. We also stopped at the Ah-Pah interpretive trail and were treated to a lesson on how to remove a logging road from a natural habitat. The trail did follow a grove of big trees that had been spared from logging so it was worth the trip.



A Banana Slug.

It was late afternoon when we arrived at the Trees of Mystery, attracted by the prospect of sailing over big trees on a sky tram. Unfortunately, the sky tram was not tall enough to actually sail over the tops of big trees. Rather, we rode in the middle of them, about 150 feet up or so, and ascended in altitude to a place where we could look across the horizon at the tops of ridges that contained them. Also visible from the top was an osprey nest, complete with nesting ospreys. From

there we could see as well the Pacific, framed by a canyon of big trees.

The self-guided Trees of Mystery hiking trail was informative and had great examples of all the redwood features that had been described in the National Park video and brochures. But we had seen all those features and the park, so hurried through as we wanted to catch the gift shop before closing and we still had no burl boxes. And of course, the shop was a bust.

Back on the road, we headed to Crescent City looking for a place to view the sunset. The perfect place we found was some kind of park, so we went back into town to buy a sub sandwich and beer with which to enjoy our sunset experience. It was probably about 50° at the top of Point St. George. We laid out our hiking ponchos and spread out our picnic on the top of a grassy hill overlooking the St. George Reef lighthouse. The sun took its time, sinking through cloudless sky as a



Osprey nest in foreground right and Redwood grove in towering above other trees on left.



Sunset over the Pacific Ocean at Point St. George in Crescent City, California.

complete self-contained orange ball. There were no streaking colors, just the bottom of the ball becoming flatter and wider as it was obscured by the waterline until we were looking at a very short horizontal orange stripe that had been the top of the ball.

The drive to Peter's Lodge was dark. We arrived well after the restaurant's last seating at 9:00PM, so we had done the right thing with our romantic sunset dinner. The next day was Father's Day, so we slept in rather than having to wait for the restaurant to open at 10:00AM for brunch. We did end up getting up a bit in advance, but hung out in the room catching up on paperwork and chores. Brunch was a feast of fruit, sugar, and cheese for Jennifer, but Michael also ate

some carved meat and baked egg creations. The after brunch, we had father's day phone calls and also a short walk to the Smith River that ran along the east side of our Lodge. We got out late and stopped at a "Redwood Burl Company" that turned out to be the source of the little burlwood boxes we had seen the previous day. Michael had a nice conversation with the proprietor about how to finish wood, as he was in the midst of planning what to do with our driftwood. Jennifer picked out no less than five boxes.

At the entrance to Jedediah Smith Redwood State Park, we found we had overshot the road to our destination. Stout Grove was on the other side of the Redwood Burl Company, but just as well

we missed it or we would not have our boxes. The Grove was one of the grandest we had seen, many families of tall trees, many near the road and many near the trails. We went the wrong way coming out of the grove and saw many more in groves that benches told us were named in loving memory but were not even on the map.

We were headed next to yet another redwood grove, but on the way saw two young men looking over a bridge. Three or four cars were parked on the other side, so we pulled over next to them and walked to the middle of the bridge to look out. Fifty feet below, we saw a dark sandy beach with several people on it, obviously planted there for the day. We heard splashing. People were swimming in the south fork of the Smith River. We made an immediate decision to join them. The Cadillac was at best precariously parked on the side of the road, so we turned in at the next "river access" sign and drove down to a parking lot with a set of rest rooms. We changed into our suits at the car and a path to the left of the restrooms brought us to the beach. Besides wishing we had brought our leftover beer from our dinner picnic the night before, we were perfectly comfortable. The tree groves had us in sweatshirts in 50-degree temperatures. Here on the beach, we were in swimsuits basking in the sun. We watched in apprehensive amazements as a few teenagers jumped off the 50 foot bridge into the river a few feet away from us. There was also a rope hanging from the bridge allowing for a more tame 20 foot drop, and we saw a few teens as well as a few thirty and forty somethings climb up the cliff next to it, use a long pole to draw

the rope to the cliff edge, take a hold of the rope, swing out and drop into the river.



A swimming hole on the Smith River.

We did not try it, but we did venture to swim. The water was cold, but not as cold as the snowmelt lakes we had recently experienced. We were able to do a lap or two before retreating to the warm sand. In the water with us were a few housewives with children. One family had brought a canoe. New people arrived and greeted each other with, "when did you get into town?" We had stumbled on a true local hangout.

Jennifer went in a second time to rinse off the sand. Unfortunately, the path back up to the car was through dank forest again and we were thoroughly chilled by the time we arrived back at the Lodge. We showered and dined early at the Lodge, and again strolled around their river access paths. We were up for breakfast about a half hour before the chef, it

seemed. We left as early as we could for Oregon Caves.

Miles traveled: 155
Departure datetime: Monday, June 17, 8:50AM
Departure weather: 57° Sunny