

Alex, Marti and Lucky week 3

In spite of a great weekend in Seattle, we were ready to get back on the road again Monday morning. We got an early start but so did the whole rest of the town. It took about 30 minutes just to get on the highway southbound out of Redmond. We headed for Mount Rainier National Park. It was another beautiful day and the mountain was not disappointing. We continued our drive around the south side of the park and back to I-5 and took a detour to see the Mt St Helen's memorial and took this picture.



Another 30 miles took us across the Columbia River and we were in Oregon following the Lewis and Clark trail to Fort Stevens State Park.



Crossing the Columbia

After Crossing the River we followed it to the very Northwest corner of the state to Astoria, our first town on the coast. We were on the lookout for a fish market and right under the Astoria bridge we found one with free wi-fi woohoo...who ever heard of a fish market with free wi-fi but we were not complaining. We bought a pint of fresh shelled oysters and a piece of salmon. We ate the oysters on the spot. Continuing on down 101 we found Ft Stevens state park. We had planned to fix dinner but after the oysters we were full so we went for a long walk on the beach with Lucky....a happy dog to be off the tether. The beach at Ft Stevens reminded me of 90 mile beach in New Zealand or Daytona without the development. It is a very shallow beach with tidal movement of about 100 yards which creates a very flat beach that disappears into the horizon with the ocean spray.



Ft Stevens beach tide in



parts of 1908 ship wreck in background tide out

Tuesday morning we got a motorcycle off the trailer and stopped just outside the gate for coffee. From there we worked our way to Tillamook...about 60 miles south taking turns on the motorcycle. There were just too many scenic turnouts to include them all.



one of many

The first thing you come to entering Tillamook from the north is the Cheese factory....a big one. There were probably 3-4 hundred tourists parked there. I played with Lucky while Marti went cheese shopping...actually lets be correct...ice cream shopping. She brought back some pretty fine ice cream....that took care of lunch. The next stop was the Tillamook air museum. As air museums go it was ok but the most impressive thing about the museum was the hangar. It was part of a navy base in WW-II and housed blimps. It was massive and all made of wood. There are only a couple of these left, with one in Amherst NJ and another at Moffett Navel Air Station near San Jose California.



Yes that is a DC-3 on the right.

After the museum visit we continued South on 101 stopping to snap more pictures. The wind started to be a real head ache on the motorcycle so we stopped at a roadside park and loaded it up and fixed the salmon from the day before.....



Marti slaves in the kitchen while Lucky spots a pine cone to fetch.

....Then on to Safeway for wine, ice and other provisions for the night. We camped at another state park called James M. Honeymoon and watched the Nutty Professor with Eddie Murphy on the DVD.

Wednesday we got an early start and stopped in Reedsport for breakfast and coffee and internet...all in one very nice coffee house. Reedsport is where we left the coast and followed the Umpqua River eastward. Our destination for the day was Crater Lake National Park. If you are ever looking for scenic eye candy this is the spot.



We fixed lunch at the top of the crater and took the Honda off the trailer. I rode it down the mountain. We stopped at Rogue River Gorge for some photos...pretty nice.



The lower we got the hotter it got. After a week of coastal temperatures we were ready to get back to the coast. We loaded the bike and pressed on to Crescent City California. Walmart here we come....a couple of glasses of wine, a tuna sandwich and we were ready for bed.

After a peaceful night at Walmart, we awoke to some pretty dense fog. It was too cold to think about an outdoor shower so we just went on our morning hunt for wireless. Crescent City was not wi-fi friendly....we pressed on to Eureka. We found a nice little coffee shop with free wi-fi and breakfast. We needed to pay some bills so we stopped at the post office and mailed off some bills that were overdue. Just outside of Eureka, we began a slow climb into the redwood forest. Not 5 minutes out of the city, we were above the fog and in the most beautiful redwood woods. We decided to take a break and hike the Ossagen trail. Too bad Lucky...no dogs allowed. This was virgin redwood forest and the ancestral home of the Yurok Indians. The trees were magnificent. The trail head said 1.8 mile to the beach...that seemed doable. It didn't mention that the trail went about 800 feet down the mountain. It could have been a misprint, maybe it meant 8.1 miles. After finally reaching the beach we had to climb the mountain to get back to the van....we sure got our workout in for the day. The good thing was we were in the fog for most of the way up so at least it was cool.



A short uphill hike followed by a very long downhill

There were countless great photo ops but here are a few



Unknown Lilly, a giant slug, nature's hanging fern basket (an old redwood root ball) and my favorite...redwood tree tops disappearing into the fog.

In spite of our workout, it was an awesome morning. It was time to think about working our way back to the coast. We unloaded a motorcycle and Marti rode it through yet another twisty turny redwood forest back to the coast.



Back to the beach

It was time to start looking for a campsite for the night. We figured that Thursday before the 4th might start to get crowded so we needed to find something early. We stopped just outside of Fort Bragg at MacKerricher state park. They had a spot for us and after considerable paperwork, we had a campsite...now for a shower....what? What do you mean the showers are broken? Crap...how about a refund?....nope! "You can stop at the next state park down the road and use this sticker to get in and get your shower"...more on that later.

We unhooked the trailer and went into Fort Bragg in search of an oil change. We found a Jiffy Lube that rolled us right in. Lucky licked the attendant's ear while he pulled it up on the lift...."that's ok I like dogs"...good thing. We got directions to a sea food restaurant and had a nice dinner...our treat to ourselves for the free Walmart camp nights. We got back to the campsite and let Lucky fetch while we built a roaring fire and the fog rolled in...another early night.

Friday dawned another grey morning and we got up early. This was the day we were to meet our college friend Winona and have a reunion after 41 years. We needed to get an early start so we could maximize our day with her. Winona was the catalyst for Marti and my first meeting. Winona and I were a duo act all through college. She sang, I played guitar for her and we worked and mostly paid our college expenses with money from a school sponsored booking agency called Student Entertainers. We had auditioned for the live show at Six Flags over Texas the spring of our junior year. They took Winona, they passed on the other half of the duo. I started out working on an oil rig for the summer and quit after the second week....headed straight back to Arlington Texas to see if I could get a job working the rides in the park...after all, I knew someone I could stay with. It turned out that Winona's room mate was my future bride Marti. We owe a lot to Winona.



Winona

Anyway....back to the morning. After 3 days without a shower, both of us were grumpy. The fact that we stopped at no less than 4 state parks on the way out of Fort Bragg and none had showers didn't help....tempers flared. I took my motorcycle off for some bonding. It was another twisty turny beautiful ride first through the redwoods then through the Anderson valley wine country. I stopped after about 25 miles and let Marti take it the rest of the way to highway 101. The sun was out and moods improved. We saw a sign for a river recreation area and decided to check it out. It looked secluded. It was warm. We decided to try the shower bag behind the van. It was cold water but after 3 showerless days we finally felt clean. We got on 101 and sped on to San Francisco...divided highway all the way. Lucky got a break from the 2 lane roads and we got a break from whimper whimper yip and dog drool.

The reunion with my old friend Winona was great. We went out to dinner with friends and talked late into the night about old times. After breakfast together the next morning we departed for Paso Robles. Compared to some of the driving we have done so far, the 3 hour sprint to Paso Robles was easy. We arrived in time to relax a bit before the big pool party and fireworks show at the water park.



John and Dallas at the water park



yes it was cold and windy on the slide tower

We finished out the weekend Sunday by doing mostly nothing. We took a walk, went grocery shopping and took a nap....tough day. We will be starting the road trip again Wednesday morning.