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Passion in the Wind

Western Bay by Bay

*The **Western Bay by Bay** ride starts by crossing the Coronado Bridge with its great view overlooking San Diego Bay and then traveling through the concrete jungles of Southern California to the historic Golden Gate Bridge. We would experience ocean side lunches and beautiful ocean vistas, including a beach full of elephant seals. The twisty roads led us up and down the mountains from the coast inland and back. We found ourselves riding among giant sequoias and only yards from elk resting in a preserve. Our final location was a place of serenity in Neah Bay, followed by fresh chowder.*

The **Western Bay by Bay** starts in Coronado Island, California and ends in Neah Bay, Washington and has the following mandatory stops:

- San Diego Bay (Receipt from Coronado, California)
- Morro Bay (Receipt from Morro Bay, California)
- San Francisco Bay (Receipt from Sausalito, California)
- Bodega Bay (Receipt from Bodega Bay, California)
- Coos Bay (Receipt from Coos Bay, Oregon)
- Neah Bay (Receipt from Neah Bay, Washington)

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MapSource shows this route as 1,602 miles requiring 1 Day, 3 hours, 30 minutes of riding time using only the mandatory stops as routing criteria.

There are many bays along the California coast including the popular Monterey Bay. The bays selected as mandatory points for this ride are sufficient to encourage a rider on the **Western Bay by Bay** ride to take a route which will include most of these bays. As with all legs of this trip, choosing mandatory stops was a matter of balancing the need to force an exact route versus the frustration of a rider documenting stops and the workload on the validators who verify the route for certification.

Day 6 Continued Coronado to San Simeon, California 359 Miles



We started Day 6 in Yuma, Arizona at about 6:45 a.m. and took about three hours to ride the 176 miles to Coronado, California, finishing the **Southern Bay by Bay** ride. We now

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headed north from Coronado 333 miles to Morro Bay, the next mandatory stop.

Going “Californian.” Unfortunately, there is no way to get from San Diego to Morro Bay without fighting the traffic through Los Angeles. Thank goodness the temperatures were in the low 70s and traffic did not come to a complete standstill too often. A few bikes were splitting lanes (driving down the dividing line between vehicles, which is legal in California). At one point, when we were stopped in traffic, I jokingly asked Tim if he thought we should split lanes. He wasn't interested! I had tried this once on a Goldwing. I made it about five miles before I lost my nerve and decided that dealing with traffic would be less stressful. Our KLRs were just as wide as the Goldwing and this would not have been an easy task.

We took I-5 from San Diego to I-405 through Los Angeles, picking up US-101 north of the city. We stopped for gas at Calabasas a little after 1:00 p.m. US-101 hits the coast at Ventura, where we decided to reward ourselves for enduring the Los Angeles traffic by having lunch overlooking the Pacific Coast.

We parked on the ground level of a parking structure next to the restaurant we selected. We walked only a few feet through the rails and noticed what appeared to be several homeless people. Fearing that we might not have any of our luggage and electronics when we returned, we decided to look for another restaurant. We found a little restaurant with outside seating called Beach House Tacos not far away in San Buenaventura State Park. We were able to park where we could watch the bikes. The view of the Pacific Ocean beaches with surfers was surreal, given the hard days of riding we had been doing.

We didn't know if we could make the 173 miles to Morro Bay, so we stopped for gas with a quick on and off at Stovell Road in Santa Maria about 4:30 p.m. and arrived in Morro Bay at about 5:40 p.m. We took the time to ride over to the coast and take pictures of the bay. At the entrance to the harbor is a large

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rock standing over 500 feet. Add some fishing boats and it was quite a scenic view.

Our plans called for us to spend the night in Carmel-by-the-Sea, home to Clint Eastwood and Tim's friend Craig Vetter. Craig is well-known in motorcycling circles as the inventor of the Windjammer fairing and other motorcycle accessories. His inventions in the 1960s and 70s helped to popularize motorcycle touring and influenced a generation of motorcyclists and designers. Craig grew up in the same area as Tim and they are good friends.



Pacific Highway Elephant Seals

Photo by Charles Lee / www.beautifulvista.com

Yes, PCH Really Is Closed. A section of the Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) about 19 miles north of San Simeon had collapsed in March and the road was closed. We had heard that the road had been repaired, and Craig assured Tim that the road was open. So when we saw a sign that read, “Road Closed 38 Miles,” we pressed on. At the intersection of California 46, another sign said “Road Closed 27 miles.” In each case there was nothing preventing us from going ahead, just a warning that the

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road was closed. We continued to see these signs every several miles but, convinced the road was open, we continued on.

You have probably guessed it by now – the road was really closed. We just had to find out for ourselves.

We did have a side benefit of ignoring the “Road Closed” signs. A few miles north of San Simeon, Tim pulled into a parking lot and said there was something here I needed to see. I looked off the cliff toward the ocean and saw what I thought was a dead animal. Tim laughed and said, “That is an elephant seal. It is alive.”

We couldn’t make it to Craig’s place, so we backtracked 19 miles to a Motel 6 at San Simeon. At least they had a restaurant and we were able to eat dinner. What a treat! We had eaten twice this day.

Energy Bars, Jerky, and Trail Mix. You probably noticed that I have not said much about stopping to eat. This is primarily because we really didn’t eat that much. If we ate breakfast, we would typically not eat lunch. If we didn’t eat breakfast, we would sometimes eat lunch. If we stopped at night and there was anything open and we were not too tired to eat we might eat dinner. Both Tim and I lost about 20 pounds on this trip. Our staple was energy bars for me and jerky and trail mix for Tim.

A Day Behind Schedule. Including our road closure investigation, we rode 573 miles on Day 6. Our original schedule called for us to spend the night in Morro Bay the previous night. San Simeon is only about 26 miles north of Morro Bay, so we were now 751 miles (nearly a full day) behind our planned schedule. From here, we would have to detour south and east to pick up our route toward San Francisco. It appeared that the chances of riding to Prudhoe Bay with Jack Gustafson were dwindling.

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Day 7
San Simeon to Garberville, California
476 Miles



We started this day by detouring south and east on Highway 101 to Paso Robles. This added 29 miles to our route, but more importantly it meant we bypassed Big Sur. That was a highlight I had looked forward to, so a return trip to the PCH will be in my future plans.

We hit the road a little before 7:00 a.m., arriving at Paso Robles about 7:30 a.m. and made our first gas stop in Santa Clara at just after 10:00 a.m.

The Golden Gate View. Our next stop was San Francisco Bay by way of the Golden Gate Bridge. I had never been to San Francisco and was really looking forward to going over the bridge. It appeared that there was a toll at one time, but not now. The website for the bridge says that “9 million people visit the bridge each year,” which works out to 24,657 people each day; 1,027 people each hour. I don’t know how many people

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were there during our visit, but it was crowded and we had a hard time finding a parking spot at the overlook. The view of the bridge, Alcatraz, and the bay were every bit as beautiful as I had imagined.

Our expectation was that there would be a visitor's center at the bridge and we would be able to get a receipt to serve as documentation. Unfortunately, the state missed a terrific opportunity. There was a visitor's center, but no shop, meaning no receipt for us. We decided to go north a few miles to Sausalito to get a receipt. It was lunch time, so we had lunch at the Bayside Café. For the **Western Bay by Bay** leg we thought of allowing a receipt from either San Francisco or Sausalito. However, allowing a receipt from San Francisco would make it possible for a rider to get a receipt and not ever go across the bridge. We decided that we would instead make Sausalito the mandatory stop for San Francisco Bay.

A Delightful Discovery. From San Francisco, we wanted to keep to the coast and continue along the Pacific Coast Highway, which we picked up in Bodega Bay, arriving at just before 2:00 p.m. Bodega Bay was not originally on our list of mandatory stops; however, after the beautiful ride getting there, we decided that it would be added!

We did not know it at the time, but this would be the start of one of the most picturesque days of our entire ride. We had to bypass Big Sur and the PCH south of San Francisco, but it is hard to imagine it could be any more beautiful than this section of the highway. As a contributor named "corey G." posted on one of the travel websites, "It is a marvel of engineering. This beautiful road is cleanly carved into the craggy coastal bluffs. It offers all-viewing vistas, zips along the water, and curvy roller coaster rides." It was simply amazing!

The Sonoma Beach Coast State Park website provides an even more graphic description:

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Sonoma Coast State Park is made up of sections that are found along 17 miles of coastline that extends from Bodega Point to Jenner. You can take a lot in by just driving the coast and visiting some of the dozen highway pull offs. Almost every parking area provides easy access to views that include parts of the same set of elements: the Pacific Ocean, prominent rocky sea stacks, the shore, crags, and headlands. The variation that each of the elements can display, the way they can be combined in different ways, and even the light at different times of the day gives you a different sense of Sonoma Coast State Park at each stop.



Pacific Coast Highway

Photo by Tim Yow

We stopped at the first pull off after leaving Bodega Bay. Tim and I had a special moment at this stop. It was just breath taking. For me it was the realization of what drew me to the idea of visiting bays, which helped me to commit to this trip. It was also why, when creating the route, I wanted to make sure to include the Pacific Coast Highway. My “Iron Butt”

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mentality was temporarily gone and Tim's annoyance with my adding mandatory locations to the route was quelled. We sat at this turn-off for several minutes absorbing the view and taking in the Pacific winds and air. The section of the PCH has now replaced the Icefields Parkway in the Canadian Rockies, which goes from Banff to Jasper, as my favorite road. I hope some day soon to return with my family.

A Necessary Decision. We stopped in Piercy, California a little after 7:00 p.m. It had taken us a little over 5 hours to travel the 165 miles from Bodega Bay. Except for the stop at the first turn off, we viewed the remaining vistas strictly from the road. However, the twists and turns and elevation changes had allowed us to only average about 30 mph. Tim and I both commented about how sore our forearms were from counter-steering through the curves.

We stopped at Garberville for the night at about 7:40 p.m. Our room was a suite with separate rooms, which wasn't anything special, but very cool for a mom and pop hotel. Stopping early meant we also had time to eat, so we walked to a nearby Chinese restaurant.

My temporary respite from the Iron Butt mentality that began at the scenic ocean view north of Bodega Bay had now ended. My preference was to push on as we had planned, ending the night at Coos Bay, Oregon. Stopping now left us 284 miles short. This meant that we were now about 1 day, 5 hours behind our original schedule.

It now looked as if there was little chance of making it to Fairbanks in time to ride the Haul Road with Jack Gustafson and his crew. I thought that by building in a safety day when I planned the trip, we would have no problem making Fairbanks in time, unless we had some kind of mechanical failure. We had no mechanical failures; it turned out the only limitation was our inability to adhere to our plan. My good feelings were

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Although the Avenue of the Giants is not required for the **35 Bay by Bay Adventure**, if a rider who has not been to this area elects to bypass the Avenue of the Giants, they have cheated themselves.

An hour or so later, just outside of a small town named Orick, California, we came upon an elk preserve. The elk were obviously accustomed to vehicles and humans, since they remained in their spots as we pulled in and watched. I'm not sure if they are always in this grassy valley or not, but on this day there was a whole herd of them.

Into Oregon. We made a quick stop for gas in Crescent City, California at 9:45 a.m. and continued on toward Coos Bay, Oregon, arriving a little before 1:00 p.m. Having worked for a structural engineer in the past, I love bridges. You would think that one end of the Coos Bay bridge would be located in Coos Bay. Oddly enough, the bridge spans Coos Bay from one side of the small town of North Bend, Oregon to the other. North Bend is just north of the town of Coos Bay. Maybe this confusion is why they changed the name to Conde B. McCullough Memorial Bridge.



Conde B. McCullough Memorial Bridge

Just north of Coos Bay, we decided to take Oregon 38 inland to I-5 to see if we could make up some time, as our next required stop was the northwestern-most point of the U.S. at Neah Bay, Washington.

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Different Objectives. We made a gas stop in Salem, Oregon just before 5:00. Tim pulled onto the exit ramp in Kelso, Washington and asked if I was ready to stop. I wasn't, but I didn't want to create any tension so I said, "If you want to stop we will stop." Since it was early, Tim wanted something besides a sandwich for dinner, so we ate at Red Lobster.

The short days were driving me nuts. Since my roadside discussion with Tim in Ganado, Texas a few days earlier, I had been trying to strictly adhere to our schedule. But it seemed to me like Tim was only committed to the route and not the timing. I let Tim call the end to our days' travels because I didn't know if there was a physical or mental issue that prevented longer days. But my frustration was mounting as I knew that the way we were going, we would not be able to meet up with Jack in Alaska. In hindsight, I was regretting that we had not gone through the schedule day by day when we had the earlier conflict.

A Chance Encounter and a Decision. We met a group of three riders from Edmonton, Alberta who plan a multi-week ride in the U.S. every year. This year they were riding in Washington and Oregon. One of these riders was the one who commented on my bike being loud and suggested it might be the "donut washer."

We were now about 1 day, 7 hours behind our plan and I needed to go ahead and let Jack know that we were not going to make it. Jack, realizing that we were looking questionable, posted this message on the Motorcycle Tourer's Forum:

The guy in Fairbanks who is hosting a get-together, with Alan and Tim as the guests of honor, needs to know if they expect to be there Friday night so he can go ahead with planning.

Alan was expecting to make it and then go on up to Deadhorse with us. Depending on how many more

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bays they intend to claim on the way north, they may be cutting it pretty close. If they change their routing, and hit Fairbanks as soon as they enter Alaska, they will have a better chance. If you can get some idea from Alan as to their expectations, maybe you could give me a heads up.

Tell those two I said to quit riding like a couple of old grandmas stopping at every antique shop and start putting some miles behind them.

I finally had to tell Jack we simply were not going to make it. It was disappointing, as I had never ridden with Jack even though we had been friends for several years, and I was looking forward to this opportunity. On the other hand, I felt that if Tim's body simply would not allow him to push any harder, then I was okay with that. That doesn't mean I still didn't wish he had taken more time to evaluate our plan and do a full assessment of what was planned and what he was capable of doing. At least I had let Jack know. While it might still gnaw on me a bit, at least I would no longer feel the stress of trying to make up time.

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Kelso to Neah Bay, Washington 251 Miles to Complete Western Bay by Bay

We were up at 6:00 a.m. and headed north on I-5. We had about 60 miles of interstate, exiting at Exit 88 (U.S. 12) toward the coast to pick up U.S. 101. This section of 101 provided another beautiful ride full of twisties and coast line views with many changes in elevation. The Washington coastline is much like Northern California and Oregon: rock formations just offshore, waves crashing in, dark sand.

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Finding the End of the Road. We eventually found ourselves riding next to Olympic National Park in search of Neah (Kneeah) Bay which is a mandatory stop. The town of Neah Bay is located on a peninsula and is the most northwestern point in the lower 48 states. It is a Makah tribe reservation, and also the ending point of the Iron Butt Association's Sunrise to Sunset ride.

We tried to find the sign that said “northwestern most point” and rode all the way to the end of the peninsula where the road ended. We still could not find the sign, nor could we see the ocean. We spotted a border patrol officer eating lunch in her car, so I interrupted and asked about the sign that we assumed would mark the point. “There isn't any sign,” she said. “But you can get to the point by walking one-half mile down that

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trail.” We made the walk. The view and the sound of the water coming into the cove was breathtaking and quite beautiful.



Neah Bay

Photo by Tim Yow

The trail is called the Cape Flattery Trail, and is actually a steep downhill, three-quarter mile trail. The climb back seemed like four miles, requiring several rest stops for two fat old men.

We stopped for lunch at Whaler’s Moon Delights, a small restaurant on the bay. I had fresh halibut chowder, coffee (my first since leaving on the trip), and a brownie. The owner was a Makah native who held two culinary degrees. She said her family had been in Neah Bay since the 1400s.

The owner told us that the Makah tribe were originally whalers, and retained the right to continue to hunt whale in their treaty. They voluntarily gave up whaling (with some pressure) in the early 1900s. They tried to reinstate what was to be an annual hunt in the traditional fashion in 1999 but were stopped by Greenpeace. She had recorded her immediate family playing traditional Makah music, and played it as we ate, providing a unique experience. We could tell she was very proud of her culture.

Western Bay by Bay Tour Completed

We started the **Western Bay by Bay** leg of the ride in Coronado, California on May 20, 2011 at 09:49 PDT and completed it when we arrived at Neah Bay on May 23, 2011 at 12:14 PDT. It had taken us 3 days, 2 hours, 25 minutes to complete what for us was a 1,642 mile leg.

Our pace was down to 529 miles per day compared to 655 miles per day for the **Southern Bay by Bay** leg. The MapSource software calculates the **Western Bay by Bay** to be 1,602 miles when based on only the mandatory stops, requiring 1 day, 3 hours, 30 minutes riding time. Our actual mileage was a little higher than this, but certified rides only consider mandatory stops when calculating the shortest distance route.

Of the 1,602 miles for this leg, only 376 miles (23%) were interstate miles. The **Southern Bay by Bay** route was 51% interstate miles, which might explain some of the drop in the daily pace.

Using the proposed criterion of a 300 mile per day pace for the “Tour” option, the **Western Bay by Bay Tour** would have a completion time of 5 days, 8 hours, 9 minutes. If offered as a certified ride, a completion time of **5 days** is recommended.

With a proposed 500 mile per day pace for the “Power Tour” option, the **Western Bay by Bay Power Tour** would have a completion time requirement of 3 days, 4 hours, 53 minutes. A completion time of **3 days** is recommended.

Our completion time qualified us for the **Western Bay by Bay Tour**, but the drop in pace put us over the recommended time for the **Western Bay by Bay Power Tour**.