

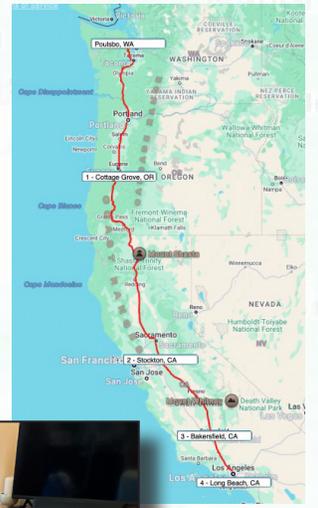


NEW ZEALAND 2024/2025

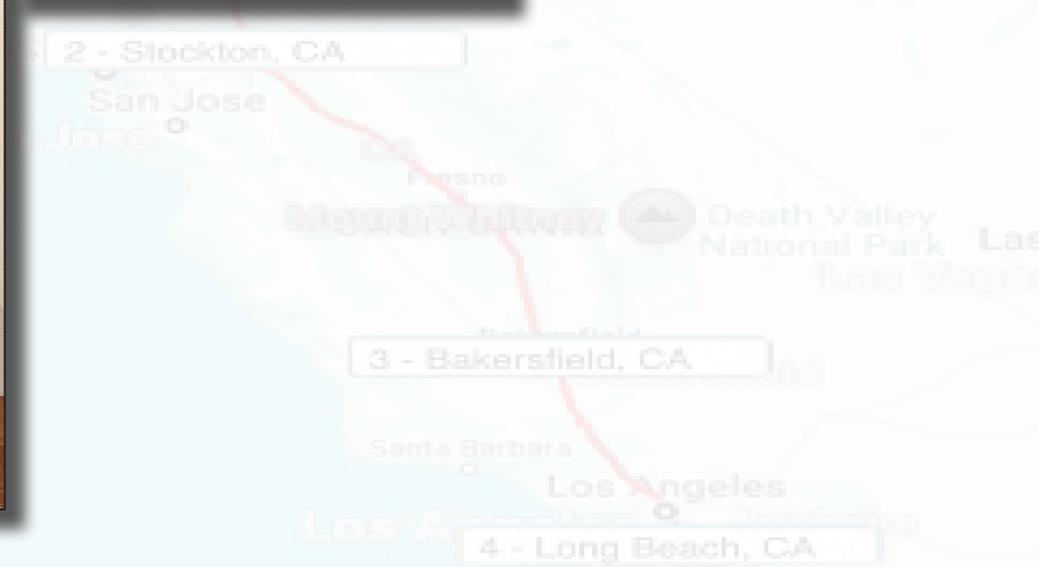
PART I: POULSBO TO LONG BEACH

We had originally planned to fly from Seattle to Los Angeles and board a ship there that would take us to Auckland, New Zealand. Considering the risk of losing seven months of luggage before we even got on the ship and trying resupply all of it would have been more than we cared to take on. To make the situation even worse was the chaos at the Seattle-Tacoma airport in recent days and weeks. While the worse of the chaos caused by the Port of Seattle computer systems being hacked had passed, reports from other travelers indicated they were still having baggage issues.

Due to all this we decided to rent a car, stuff all our luggage into it and drive to the Port of Los Angeles over three or four days.



The first day's drive got us to Cottage Grove in Oregon. We slept under one of their famous local covered bridges. The next morning we had breakfast under yet another covered bridge and then headed on further south.





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The next day got us to Bakersfield, California. We have been to Bakersfield several times in our motor home while on our way back and forth to the South West for the winter. It had been a long time since we had stayed in a hotel there.

After our one night stand in Bakersfield we headed to Long Beach and the traffic chaos of Los Angeles. It mattered little which route we took thru Los Angeles to Long Beach as all our navigation maps and aids showed slow and or stopped traffic on every reasonable route through Los Angeles to Long Beach.

We arrived at our hotel, checked in, dumped our luggage in the room, returned the rental car to an office about one mile away and hitched a ride back to the hotel.



I knew the Los Angeles port is one of the biggest in the world, but until I saw it in real life, the size... well... the size of it was incredible. While I was photographing it from the bridge near our hotel a fellow walked by and commented that it was "the mouth of a beast". I don't know exactly what he meant, but in terms of the commerce it represents (the beast), the Port of Los Angeles is clearly the mouth of it.

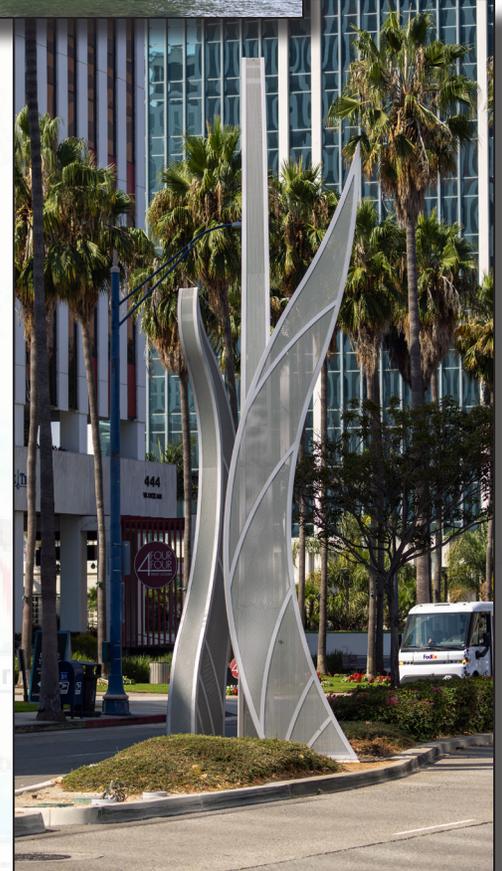




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We had a free day before getting on the ship, so we took a walk around Long Beach.





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Our walk came to it's furthest from our hotel when we made it to StarChucks so Wendy could get her Grande-Skinny-Decaf-Vanilla-Latte.

After Wendy finished her drink, we headed back to the hotel.



The ship Queen Mary, now a hotel, was next door to our hotel.





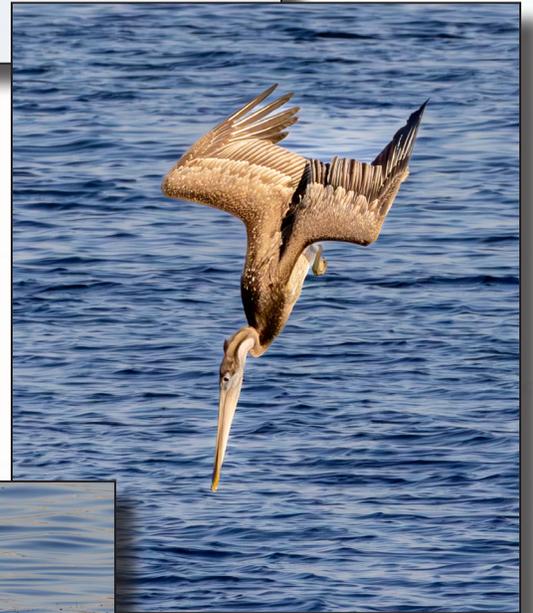
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We spent a couple evenings watching birds along the shore line path in front of our hotel.

Pelicans were the main local bird there, along with the Heermann's gulls that pester them for their catches.



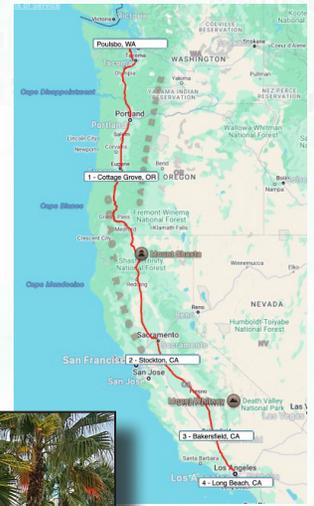
A lucky catch (on my part) of this tern that speared a fish for dinner.





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We had one more nice-view-meal on the restaurant deck of the hotel. A heron watched over us as the sun set or maybe he was enjoying the Day Of The Dead event being held just adjacent to our room.

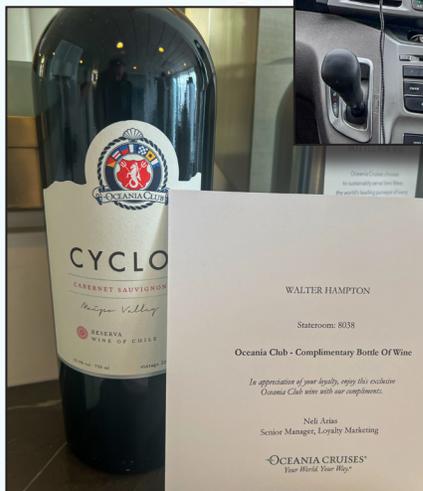


The next morning we Uber'd to the ship we were boarding. It was on the San Pedro side of the harbor while we stayed on the Long Beach side.

There was a bit of traffic as someone (a truck driver) clipped the overhead signage which then collapsed and scattered itself across all but one lane.

We finally made it to the ship, did all the check in things (similar to an airport) and boarded the ship.

Our cabin was not ready yet, so we were entertained by a string quartet. When we did get to the room there was a bottle of champagne AND this red wine. The red wine because they thought we had been on 7 Oceania cruises. Our butler was a bit confused when we said this was our first time on an Oceania ship, at least the first time I could remember. Not wanting a big argument and to get off on a bad footing with our butler I told him it must be something I did and accepted it as MY mistake and thanked him for the wine.



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