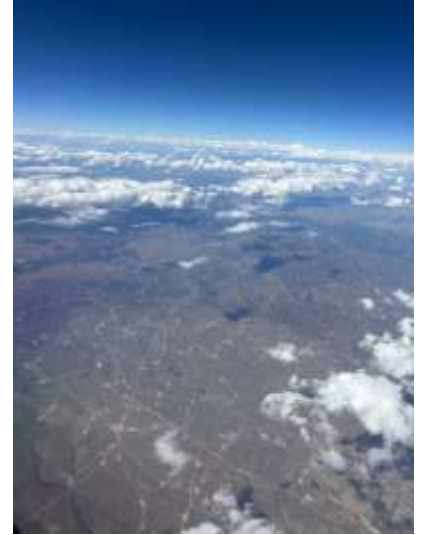


West Coast USA

October 4-18, 2025

Saturday, October 4th

We arrived at Portland International Airport (PWM) from Brunswick, early for our United flight to Washington Dulles Airport (IAD). We quickly ushered through TSA and decided to have a snack at Shipyard. When we arrived at IAD, we rushed to our next flight and headed off to San Diego International Airport (SAN). We had a pleasant flight, including a good lunch. One thing I like to do when flying cross-country is to try taking pictures of the landscape below. It's often difficult to get good shots because of clouds or whatever. This shot was taken somewhere over Oklahoma (I think) where there is a network of roads from one oil well site to the next (lower left).



When we arrived at SAN and retrieved our checked baggage, we found the shuttle to the car rental center and headed for Avis. The new rental center was quite nice, but confusing. We were told to take an escalator to the third level, past an interesting mural which appeared to be constructed from car



taillights. We finally obtained access to our car and began driving to [La Jolla](#), about a twenty minute drive. After settling into 3162 Luna Avenue, we drove to our reservation at [Duke's](#) in La Jolla where we arrived early. Since we were hungry and tired, we sat at the bar. Sue had the Poke Tacos and I had the Crab Cakes. The end of a long day.

Sunday, October 5th

Sue suggested visiting the [Birch Aquarium](#) at the University of California San Diego (UCSD). It was a delightful visit, although there were lots of small children there and could sometimes be annoying. The aquarium had great exhibits and we particularly enjoyed the [penguins](#) and [sea dragons](#).

After having lunch at the aquarium, we drove to the [Mission Bay Resort](#) where we planned to meet our friends, Patricia and husband Bob. As we waited, their son Mike arrived with his family. We all got together eventually and had a great visit before Mike had to leave. Our visit continued with snacks and drinks with Bob and Patricia. Unfortunately, this was the last time we would see them on this trip. So, we will be on our own tomorrow. Tonight, we'll have dinner at [Amalfi Llama](#), where they serve my favorite dish [Cacio e Pepe](#).

Monday, October 6th

Well, the Cacio e Pepe at Amalfi Llama was unimpressive. However, Sue's pizza was good and we took the leftovers back to our rental for dinner tonight.

We decided to spend the day exploring [Balboa Park](#). Since we arrived around lunchtime, we had sandwiches at [Panama 66](#) in the park. Then we walked through the lovely Japanese Friendship Garden. Then we walked to the nearby [San Diego Air and Space Museum](#) where we walked even more. It was impressive, though. The exhibits were incredible. The [Blue Angels](#) jet was impressive, as were many others.

After such a busy day, we enjoyed the leftovers for dinner while watching an episode of "The Reluctant Traveler".

Tuesday, October 7th

We left our La Jolla rental and drove to [Bonsall](#) to meet our niece Doreen and husband Mark, as well as their two border collies, Jazz and Stormy.



After a pleasant visit and a panini lunch from Doreen, we drove to our new vacation rental at 4654 Valle de Sol. It was a beautiful house on a ranch with magnificent views, gardens, and chickens, even a rooster. We unloaded our luggage and began exploring the property with Mark and Doreen. We met the owner of the property. She was very friendly and accommodating.

We returned with Doreen and Mark. She prepared a nice dinner of Chicken Marbella at their house while we visited with them. Finally, we returned to our ranch rental and bid another day adieu.

Wednesday, October 8th

We drove to Mark and Doreen's house to continue our visit. Their house is nice and they have a large lot in back that is used mostly to exercise the dogs. They told us that some people have small dwellings built on them which they can rent. The laws in California are sometimes difficult to understand. After lunch, we spent the rest of the afternoon talking about what's been going on in our lives. I was happy to spend more time with them since we had not spent much time together when I met them the first time. Later that afternoon, we decided to play [Mexican Train](#). It's a game played with dominoes and interesting rules. They actually had the game with double-twelve dominoes. We had dinner at [Curry & More](#) (good Indian food) followed by a drive past the Oceanside Spider House.

Thursday, October 9th

We left rancho rental early to drive to SAN, return our rental car, check our bags, and get through TSA for our flight to San Francisco International Airport (SFO). As we were heading to our gate, we were informed by United that our flight was delayed because SFO air traffic controllers were being cautious and letting fewer planes land at the same time. So, we found the [PGA Tour Grill](#) where we shared a burger and fries for our early lunch. Just as we finished eating, we were informed that our flight was now leaving on time. We had to hustle to our gate but we made it and settled into our seats for the short flight. We arrived, picked up our bags, and caught the shuttle train at the Rental Car Center. The line at the Avis counter was long and it took over thirty minutes to get to our car. Finally, we began the long drive to 2318 Aria Place in [Santa Rosa](#). We unloaded the car and called Steve and Karen. They agreed to pick us up and drive to [La Gare](#) for our six o'clock dinner reservation. They served escargots in the shell, as they should be. The soupe à l'oignon au gratinée was also particularly good. Everyone else had the special chicken dish of the night. Tomorrow we'll be able to visit more.

Friday, October 10th

We drove to Karen and Steve's house. They drove us to [VJB Cellars](#) in the village of [Kenwood](#) where we enjoyed pizza for lunch on this beautiful day. After lunch, we drove to [Jack London Ranch](#) to explore some of the huge property. We started in his house. It's now a museum that he called his "House of Happy Walls".



It had incredible views from the main floor window and was



filled with memorabilia from Jack's amazing life. We decided to walk down to the remains of the "Wolf House", which was Jack's "dream house". It was a beautifully designed house but



eventually burned, leaving a rocky memorial to what it was to become.



We had walked down to "Wolf House", so we had to hike up the hill to get to the parking lot. Fortunately, there was a volunteer who drove us up the hill in her golf cart. We drove back to Steve and Karen's house where Karen prepared a fabulous dinner. Meanwhile, Steve entertained us with his amazing piano skills using his synthesizer. It was a perfect, but sad, end to our short visit.

Saturday, October 11th

We left Santa Rosa for 765 Beechnut Court in [San Rafael](#) (this was the best rental we had for this trip). Fortunately, we were able to leave our luggage before going to Pete and Lana's house.



She prepared a delicious, healthy lunch for us.

Afterward,

Pete drove us to [Golden Gate Park](#) to explore the [Botanical Garden](#).



Many areas of the gardens were closed for maintenance. However, we walked a lot and saw some great trees and other flora. We drove back to our respective dwellings to prepare for our seven o'clock reservation at [Scoma's](#) in [Sausalito](#). I was particularly excited about this dinner because, although I lived in Sausalito for some time, I had never dined at Scoma's. We were able to get a table in the main dining room. It had a great view of [San Francisco Bay](#) and the city on the other side. Perfect way to end our day.

Sunday, October 12th

Pete and Lana invited us to join them at the [Marin Farmer's Market](#) at nine o'clock but we declined. Lana was leaving early for San Francisco for a



family gathering so they wanted to go to the market early. However, Sue and I decided to go later that morning, around noon. We had a challenging time finding parking but eventually walked into the area filled with market stalls. We began searching for a food stall and found [Tru Gourmet](#) dim sum. After lunch, we walked around inspecting the various produce stalls. It was almost closing time for the market so we left to go visit with Pete for the afternoon. It was a pleasant afternoon talking about old times. I learned some things about Pete that I had never known during our long friendship.

We decided to have dinner at [Chalet Basque](#), one of my old favorite restaurants in San Rafael. It also offered another opportunity for me to order escargots. Pete and I had the lamb loin special, which I offered half (I was unable to finish) for Lana to have later. Sue had French onion soup. It was very enjoyable dinner and we left, hoping to be able to say goodbye to Lana. She arrived shortly after we did and, after a short visit, we returned to our favorite rental apartment.

Monday, October 13th

This was the beginning of the most disappointing three days of the trip. It started well, the drive to [Napa](#) wasn't bad, and we had a nice brunch at [Grace's Table](#). They offered Shrimp and Grits, one of my favorite brunch dishes. [Copia](#) was a short distance from us, so we decided to go there and explore. When I lived in the area, it was a very different place, sort of an homage to [Julia Child](#). Now seems to be more of a cooking school environment, perhaps a [Culinary Institute of America](#) (CIA) influence. It began to rain as we entered Copia. We toured the exhibition of cooking utensils; about all the museum there was. We left in a pouring rain to our next rental at 1600 Atlas Peak Road, AKA [Silverado Resort and Spa](#). We had some difficulty locating our rental in the rain using a sign at the entrance to the large property. It was in a unit far away from the parking lot at the edge of the property and we did our best to get most of our luggage there in the rain. When we did find it, we discovered that the key was in a lockbox that was difficult to open. Finally, I was able to open the sliding glass door entry to find what was essentially a cheap motel room with a double closet that was used to construct a "kitchenette" with a small refrigerator and microwave oven, not even a toaster. The bathroom sink doubled as the kitchen sink and finding a place to eat breakfast was difficult. It was very depressing. We hoped that our dinner at [Zuzu](#) would lighten our mood. Even though it was still raining, we managed to get there fairly dry and an evening of drinks and tapas made the days end much better. At least the bed in the motel rental was comfortable.

Tuesday, October 14th

Because of the rain yesterday and dangerous weather today, our scheduled balloon flight over Napa Valley with [Aloft](#) was cancelled. This was sort of expected, but it was extremely disappointing. We had both been anticipating this, even though Sue had been on a balloon flight once.

Thinking it might be good to have a nice breakfast, we found [Model Bakery](#) online and decided to go there. We discovered that this was not a sit-down restaurant so we ordered some items to take back to the rental. We found a Julia Child exhibition at the [Museum of Arts and Culture](#) (MAC) in [St. Helena](#). We planned to have lunch at [Bistro don Giovanni](#) in [Yountville](#), then go to the MAC. It turned out to be a good afternoon and we followed that with dinner at [Carpe Diem](#) to help assuage the disappointment of the day.

Wednesday, October 15th

I discovered the café at the resort so we could have a better cup of coffee for breakfast, as well as some other choices, kind of like Starbucks. Later we planned to have lunch at [Brix](#) in St. Helena, then a walk around Yountville. We will have dinner at [Bistro Jeanty](#) tonight (menu: Salad Lyonnaise, Friture D'Éperlans, Steak Tartare). Terrific way to end our visit to Napa Valley.

Thursday, October 16th

After breakfast from the café, we happily left motel rental and began the drive to the [Hyatt Regency SOMA](#). We decided that the best way to get to San Francisco was to drive south to Oakland and cross at the [Bay Bridge](#). The traffic was terrible, as expected, but it was the best way to get to the hotel and leave our luggage, then to [Union Square](#), where we were to return our rental car to Avis. After the car was returned, we walked toward the hotel and stopped at the [Pinecrest Diner](#) for lunch. From there, we walked to the hotel. Our room on the corner of the thirty-third floor (3301), had an incredible view. We met Tom and Jane after they arrived at the hotel. We had a bottle of white wine and we had drinks before walking to [Tadich Grill](#) for dinner.



Friday, October 17th

We met for breakfast at [The Grove](#), across from the hotel on 3rd Street. Our plan was to walk down Market Street to the [Embarcadero](#), stopping at Fremont and Beale Streets where Jane and I once worked. We explored the

Ferry Terminal Building and market near the Embarcadero before riding the tram to *Fisherman's Wharf*. We walked to a little place called the *Codmother*, where Tom and Jane proclaimed were the best fish and chips. After lunch, we walked to Hyde Street to catch the cable car back to Powell Street where we could walk to the hotel. I got a spot standing outside with Sue sitting next to me. We had a fabulous ride down and:

Sue shot this splendid video from her phone

We walked back to the hotel, stopping at a store for necessary supplies; i. e., wine, gin, etc. We settled into Jane and Tom's room (3307 right down the hall) and I was introduced to *Rummikub*. The story is long and embarrassing so I won't burden you with the details. However, I learned to play, sort of, and we continued playing until we began planning to order pizza from *California Pizza Kitchen*, right across the street. Although the pizza kitchen was literally, right across the street, in order to jaywalk there without being killed is, I'm sure, not possible. So, we walked to the end of the block to cross at a crosswalk, then back up to the middle of the block in order to reach the restaurant. And, of course, the same thing getting back to the hotel. Not an easy trip but filled with adventure.

Saturday, October 18th 03:30 PDT

Tom and Jane graciously drove us to SFO. From there to IAD, where we have a long layover. Then to PWM and home ***21:30 EDT***.