

Over Labor Day weekend, Kristin and I took a trip to San Francisco. Since we didn't take a trip immediately after our Wedding, this was one of our smaller trips in lieu of a honeymoon.

We flew out on Saturday morning with a full three days worth of activities planned. The approach into the San Francisco airport was an interesting start to the trip. Apparently there was a backlog of planes to land, so we performed three large circles back over the Pacific ocean before getting the go ahead to land. I guess there are worse things to have to look at outside the window than the coastline of California.

There was a mix up with our hotel room - they tried to give us a room that was already occupied. So, we had to spend some time in the hotel bar watching college football - oh shucks. After a couple hour wait, they upgraded us to a 25th floor room with a great view. In the grand scheme of things, it was worth it. That evening we walked a couple of blocks to church at St. Patrick's Cathedral and then had a quick dinner before retiring for the evening.



On Sunday, we had an eventful day planned. Because we only decided to rent a car for one day while we were out there (see ridiculous prices to park overnight), we planned to go see Muir Woods first, and drive down the coast to Monterey/Carmel - all in the same day. If we had to do it all over again, I think we would make the day trip to Monterey a separate trip altogether. The morning excursion to Muir Woods began with a stop on the other side of the Golden Gate Bridge for pictures. Luckily we did that early because when we passed back by about three hours later, the crowd was 4-5 rows deep.

After a brief stop at the bridge, we continued to the Redwoods. Again, we were early, so the place was quiet and peaceful. I think both Kristin and I agree that this was one of our favorite stops during the whole trip. Because we had so many things planned for each day, we didn't get to spend a long time at any one place. Muir Woods is one place that we would spend more time at if we got to do it again. That place is pretty phenomenal. The gigantic redwoods are a sight to behold and provide some pretty awesome picture opportunities.

Our trip down the coast to Monterey started with a stop in Half Moon Bay at the recommendation of a friend. We stopped for 30-45 minutes, walked up and down Main Street and shared a sandwich at one of the open air cafes.

As we continued south down Highway 1, I was starting to get pretty frustrated because the fog was so thick that we couldn't see anything off to our right (the ocean). I was thinking to myself, Great, we spend all this time and rent the car and its going to be like this the whole way. Luckily, shortly after, the fog broke and opened up to some of the most magnificent scenery. Granted, I've lived in Texas my whole life so I don't get to see the ocean much. Needless to say, that lifted my spirits.

We decided to take the scenic route down to the Carmel area and with multiple stops to take pictures at the different beach spots, the trip took a lot longer than planned. Deciding to drive on that stretch of highway on the Sunday of Labor Day weekend was probably not the smartest decision we made. We were stuck in bumper to bumper traffic for a good 45 minutes to an hour outside of Monterey.



Picture that scene in *Swingers* when they decided to drive to Vegas on a whim. They are about 45 minutes outside of Vegas and what once seemed like a great idea had quickly lost its luster.



Once we finally got to the Monterey Peninsula, the drive was worth it. We followed the 17-mile drive through Carmel and Pebble Beach. We followed the informational brochure to all the tourist points. We stopped and took pictures at Poppy Hills and at the various stops along the drive. That, in and of itself, made the time spent in the car worth it. We didn't get an opportunity to stop and do much in Carmel because it was extremely crowded and it was already getting late for our drive back.

Monday (Labor Day) we had tickets to see the Giants and Padres play at 1:30. Our hotel was right next to Union Square and so we

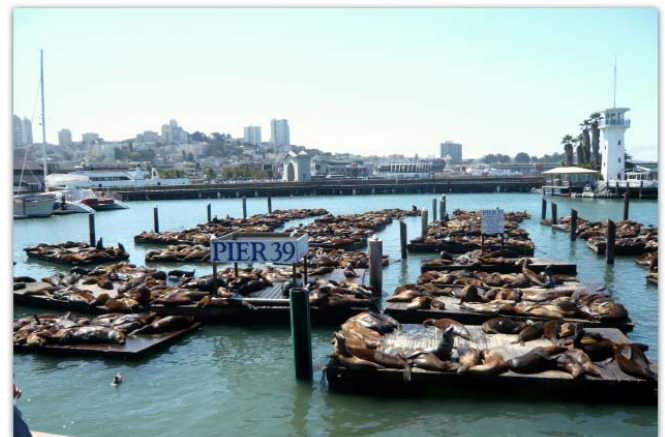


spent some time that morning walking around and sight seeing. Close to game time, we walked the mile to AT&T Park and found our seats. We were very fortunate in that our seats were just under the overhang, sheltering us from the sun. I told Kristin I planned it that way, but it was really just blind luck. About half way through what was an eventful, but kind of boring game, we toured the stadium - hung out on the bay side and watched all of the kayakers awaiting home run balls in McCovey cove. That is pretty neat.

In the seventh inning, we left the stadium. Without much else planned for the day, I decided it would be a good idea to walk north along the Embarcadero. Wandering aimlessly up the street quickly became exhausting. We followed that up with another questionable decision to try to walk back to the hotel through Chinatown - which is almost exclusively straight up hill.

Maybe I didn't get it, but Chinatown was, um, interesting . . . to say the least. It was worth walking through once, but I don't think I'd have any desire to go back.

Tuesday morning we awoke early and took the cable car route north to Pier 33 for the cruise to Alcatraz Island. The ferry to the island took about 15 minutes. Once on the island, we took the audio tour throughout the prison. It's kind of cool because the majority of the presentation is narrated by the former guards and inmates. That took about an hour with stops to take pictures. Again, looking back on it, we probably should have spent more time there. We didn't take advantage of all that they had to offer (movies, presentations etc..) It was a pretty awesome experience nonetheless.



We headed back to Fisherman's Wharf for lunch and then went to see the sea lions on Pier 39. Quite interesting and foul at the same time. From there, we strolled along the northern part of Fisherman's Wharf to Ghirardelli Square. Despite just eating lunch, I wasn't afraid to kill one of the better fudge brownie sundaes that I've had in my life. At that point we enjoyed some much needed rest. We'd been advised that McCormick and Culeto's was not worth the money for dinner but they happened to be having Happy Hour from 3-6 that day and we were right there. We took advantage of good Happy Hour prices to have a light dinner before we headed back. At this point we couldn't stand to walk anymore and Kristin was fit to be tied about riding the cable cars, so we stood in line for about 45 minutes to wait on the cable car. There just happened to be a street musician there to help us pass the time - his band most appropriately named, "Spare Change."

Wednesday morning was an early breakfast at Lori's Diner, a quick stop at the bookstore (books/magazines for the flight), and then the BART to the airport for the return home. Though quite busy, this trip was a blast. One of those that you take for granted while you are there, and appreciate much more looking back on it.