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the Thoroughbred Sports
Car Club

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About Our Club

Calendar

The [Official Calendar](#) is published on our web site. Print a copy to keep in your historic log booked vehicle.

Club Meetings

[Club meetings](#) are held on the 2nd Wednesday of every month except December and January at Carlingford Bowling Club.

Club Objectives

- To foster a better acquaintance and social spirit between the various owners of Thoroughbred Sports Cars in Australia
- To help and advance Thoroughbred Sports Cars in Australia
- To establish and maintain, by example, a high Standard of Conduct and a Respect of the Laws of the Road

Club Shoppe

Visit the [Club Shoppe](#) and make sure you are dressed appropriately for the next event.

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Incorporation

TSCC is incorporated as an association;

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Affiliation

TSCC is affiliated with CAMS Limited

Committee

The contact details of the [Committee](#) are published on the Website.

Other Information:

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Articles are invited and should be mailed to the Editor for publication showing the name and address of the author

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Top Gear

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Current and previous editions may be downloaded [here](#).

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Top Gear has been continuously published since September 1981.

The Big Trip-Introduction

Roger & Tess Morgan



Where should the big trip in 2019 take TSCC members with a spirit of adventure?

Why not plan a Big Trip to the USA?

Why not drive within just four States of the USA - Arizona, Utah, Nevada and California over 22 days, maybe over 3300 miles, (5300 kms) stay in 13 different locations. Visit National Parks, drive fantastic roads, marvel at awe-inspiring scenery and visit a couple of prestigious car sheds. Shelby and Penske we had in mind.

How hard can it be....it won't take that long to arrange, ok let's do it! Seems like almost 2 years ago we sat around chatting about the route, the attractions, the hotels and motels, and after much planning and action the day finally arrived.

We started in Phoenix, Arizona in May, anticipating hot weather, - 95deg F (35C) was usual for the time of year. However, 5 days into the trip significantly cooler temperatures were enjoyed with sunny skies providing cool mornings. In fact, on the way to Jerome on 21 May the temperature was 52deg F (11C) at Mingus Mountain, which at the time appeared very cold – until we hit 31F, snow and icy roads within 3 hours of leaving Moab at 92F on day 12. The next day heading towards Bryce Canyon from Cedar City, the mercury dipped below freezing yet again....and did I mention the snow filled and capped pine trees near Flagstaff and Lake Tahoe? Almost a constant towards the end of the trip were the snow-capped Sierra Nevada Mountains which were viewed on various drive days.

The first few days led us through Tucson, Tombstone and upscale Scottsdale where many men drooled in Roger Penske's showroom and Sedona seduced with its red rock riot.

Arizona's natural wonders were almost eclipsed by what Utah had in store. The glitz and gambling halls of Nevada so different from the deserted and lonely highways. From Yosemite, Arches, Bryce to Las Vegas, Carmel and Los Angeles a study in stunning contrasts.

What follows are the views, opinions, recollections and photos of our friends on the trip, each cajoled, coaxed, encouraged into recording their daily exploits.

“Meet me at the Alamo”

No, it wasn't Davy Crockett and Jim Bowie but the enthusiastic and happy members of the 2019 Big Trip contingent we were meeting.

At 1pm we all converged at the Alamo Car Rental at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport. From Hawaii, San Francisco, Los Angeles. Apart from the Braithwaites who had visited all points north, south, east and west on their holiday before awaiting the convoy at the Tucson hotel.

For those arriving from Sydney into LAX and Phoenix this morning, battling to keep their eyes open, to the much smarter ones who flew in a day or more earlier we all got to our cars and planned a single file crocodile to exit the airport and get on the appropriate Highway south to Tucson.

Two hours later all arriving safely at our hotel, the Hampton Inn at Tucson Mall we pull over with the agreed “take care of each other” agreements made at the airport road, being largely discarded within a couple of miles of our departure. This was our 3rd trip to Phoenix but for some it's the first trip to the USA driving on the wrong side of the road with the steering wheel, pedals and important passenger also being in the wrong place.

Despite best intention some of our first time USA drivers suffered a baptism of fire when leaving the airport on the 1—10. The first 20 mins or so driving in a foreign country can be challenging for most competent drivers, more so when some of your mates are off like scalded cats. Luckily Dominic and Pauline clung grimly to the coat-tails of speedy Shaune Bailey, as she disappeared into the distance whilst still adhering to the speed limit. Konrad, driving confidently even overtook the Morgans who were desperately trying to peer into unfamiliar cars to try to recognise occupants speeding alongside to reassure themselves all TSCC friends were finding their way to Tucson.

This first 110 miles of our trip was a really quite scenically dull freeway, but it afforded a reasonably easy road for an introduction to driving on the right. The only disappointment on this first day was that Ross and Sandra were not with us, pulling out of the trip only 16 hours before they were due to leave Sydney, due to family illness. We were very sorry they could not join us on this much-anticipated adventure. The remaining contingent checked into the hotel and prepared for the opportunity for adventure over the next 3 weeks.

After the ceremonial unloading of necessary luggage (the male half of our partnership repeatedly astonished at the number of suitcases deemed necessary for a holiday of any duration) and the obligatory copious cups of tea consumed – hot water prepared courtesy of kettles sourced from a bulk delivery organised on line from Target USA to our Tucson hotel.very smart purchase not appreciated by all the drivers initially, but from the comments later overheard well appreciated – eventually.

After unpacking every item, from each suitcase apparently, according to my luggage handler, we meet for a short stroll to the nearby Italian restaurant Giuseppe's. The food in this restaurant previously sampled and recommended by Jeremy and Julie who arrived at the hotel a couple of days earlier. A superb meal in very convivial surroundings, a perfect start to the trip.

Despite the tiredness of several members of the group no time was lost in finding places this evening to shop. We note that few -if any – men took advantage of this early opportunity. It seems obvious already that more suitcases will be needed for the return trip.



Day 2 – Tucson to Tombstone via the Boneyard

Terry Daly

Firstly, the weather was perfect for travelling and sightseeing and this is what a majority of what the somewhat Jet lagged travellers did in Southern Arizona. In fact when we reached Tombstone we were approx. 12 miles from the Mexican Border.

Unfortunately, some of our women folk elected to attack the shops in Tucson and join their partners later for lunch. And attack the shops they did with Robyn buying four new articles of clothing (she didn't need any of it but it was different and she wouldn't find such shirts etc. anyway in Australia, a theme I heard many times on the tour). The rest of the group took a Roger Morgan organised tour of the Boneyard at the nearby airport and what a great sight we all encountered.

I cannot tell you how many planes were in the Boneyard and even the tour guide didn't know as planes come and go on a regular basis. Planes and parts of planes are sold on a daily basis but I have heard from various sources that there would



be as many as 8000 planes there on any day.

Roger had pre booked the tour prior to leaving Sydney and as we had to go through a highly secure US Airforce base our credentials were well scrutinized and we were subjected to an airport security check. It was well worth it to see the thousands of planes lined up as far as the eye could see and then there were special variants of planes that were parked on either side of the path the bus proceeded down. Expect commentary of all the planes were provided by ex-military personal. A look at a few photos will show the rows upon rows of planes sitting in the Boneyard waiting to be either resold or broken up for parts.

The next part of the day was devoted to the PIMA Air and Space Museum that adjoins the Airport and again we had the opportunity to see just on 300 planes all with documentation on either their rarity or their history. Half a day did do this museum justice but my picks were the huge B52 bombers from both the Korean and Vietnam wars. And as an added bonus many USA ex-servicemen were on hand to give us updates on the planes and their history. It was my second trip to this museum but I still didn't have time to explore the museum to its fullest. Many had lunch at the café and then proceeded to our next overnight stop Tombstone some 50 miles (or 80k) away. Note the USA is still in Miles!

We all stayed at the Tombstone Hotel which is about 400 metres from the famous Boot Hill Graveyard where many of the notorious bank robbers and gunslingers from the late eighteen century were buried. The late 40's Packard Hearse that sits at the front of the establishment has many writings on the side of it but the one that caught my attention was

When you get Shot and Before you are stiff

We'll be there in just a Jiff

We'll be the last to let you Down!

It also claims to be the most photographed car in the USA!

Drinks this evening were held in the outdoor courtyard area which had vast and uninterrupted views of the country surrounding Tombstone. We couldn't have had a better place to discuss our first day of activities.

Tombstone (The Town Too Tough to Die) itself is an old silver mining city started in 1879. It was originally acquired from Mexico by the Gadsden Purchase on December 30th 1853. And how did Tombstone get its name?

It was actually named by a mining prospector Ed Schieffelin and the story goes like this. Ed was based at the nearby Fort and used to regularly prospect for Silver in the surrounding area which was the home of the Apache Indians. The soldiers asked Ed what he was doing out in the wilderness and he simply told them “Collecting Rocks” and their simple answer was “You keep fooling around out there amongst those Apache Indians and the only rock you will find is a Tombstone” And when he finally discovered Silver he called the town Tombstone !

Concluding drinks by 630 pm we all proceeded to our welcome diner at Johnny Ringo’s a restaurant on 10th street. By the way, Johnny Ringo was the head of the cowboys that confronted Wyatt, Virgil and Morgan Earp plus Doc Holliday in that famous shootout near the OK Corral. I have attached a photo of the paper from October 1881 that reported on that shootout.

As we all know American restaurants serve BIG dinners and that’s what we had at Johnny Ringo’s. At the conclusion of diner Steve Knox welcomed everyone to this year’s Big Trip and thanked Tess and Roger Morgan for organising it. After the official opening concluded many went for a walk through town and some dropped in for a drink at Big Nose Kates. But that’s another story for another day.

Of interest, if one looks in the back streets behind houses, cafes, etc you will always find a lot of old American cars!

A great start to a great trip!



Day 3 – Tombstone to Scottsdale

Julie Braithwaite

Today was a bit like a 'scatter rally' run in Classic Rallies – everyone started at one place and had to find their way to another by whatever route they chose – in this case, Tombstone to Scottsdale.

One Morgan suggested route was 214 miles and would take a little under 4 hours...but I don't think anyone stuck precisely to the suggestion.

In no particular order:

Rob and Sue, Dom and Pauline, Laurie and Fran, Stephen and Jill and Konrad and Caroline took the opportunity to drive Mt Lemmon at Tuscon. The summit is 9,159 feet and is about 30F cooler than Tuscon. It is a fabulous road (we had driven it the day before the group arrived) with spectacular scenery. The couples drove to various elevations, most turning around at about 7,000 feet, but the Bromley's drove to the top. Unfortunately, some encountered a fatal motorcycle accident on the return down the mountain, which was very distressing.

Mt Lemmon: <https://jbraithwaite.smugmug.com/Americas/USA/Arizona-AZ/Mt-Lemmon>

The Baileys and the Currans headed to Kartchner Caverns, but were unable to do a tour as tickets were not available until the afternoon and it would be then too late to make Scottsdale. Instead they explored the outside areas. The caves were discovered in 1974 by two cavers who kept their discovery secret, even from the owners. They eventually told the owners in 1978 who eventually approached the state of Arizona to develop the park.

Terry and Robyn opted for the most miles travelled award by first heading 50 miles south to Douglas, on the Mexican border, then north for 170 miles to Safford for lunch, then 80 miles NW to Globe, and onto Apache Junction and Scottsdale – in all around 330 miles on mostly back roads.

Roger and Tess drove straight to Phoenix and had lunch with friends. They then visited another friend in a gated community who has parked in his garage, among other cars, a McLaren, Tesla, NSX and a Lotus Elan.

We visited Mission San Xavier del Bac, 8 miles south of Tucson. We travelled on back roads to see this baroque Catholic church completed in 1797 by the Spanish. It is known as the 'White Dove of the Desert'. It is a magnificent building, the oldest intact European structure in Arizona.

The Mission: <https://jbraithwaite.smugmug.com/Americas/USA/Arizona-AZ/San-Xavier-Mission>

We left Tombstone and overnighed in Scottsdale, before heading to Sedona

Hit the outlets and even though I said I didn't need anything nor would I buy anything, I still managed to find a couple things I just had to have. I also needed to get some more endone so took my health summary from Aussie doctor to a medical centre here, but because it's a narcotic I could only get a script from the hospital. So I ended up going to Mayo clinic where dad was charged \$3500 but I am hoping that as it was only a script and they didn't do any tests it wont be too much. I went to get the medicine from the chemist and dad reminded me his pill which cost \$38 at home was \$400 here so I am thinking it's going to cost me hundreds of dollars, I should just go to a street corner and get it cheaper. But alas, it was only \$11 yay, but I am crossing my fingers for when I get the hospital bill ugh

I am still getting over my cold, I have gone through 3 boxes of tissues so far but it isn't slowing me down, no that's the back spasms that started today. It has settled but I am trying to take it easy, while I am lifting up suitcases and mum is yelling at me. mum's knee is not so great, she is trying to take it easy and dad's wrist is still sore and he has problem picking things up and using it, a fine lot of sickies we are. It's just past 9pm and dad has pushed himself to stay awake so now he can go to sleep, he wakes up and then of course, has to wait for us sleepy heads to get up. He is just loving it.

I wanted to stop at a monument that was supposed to have 50 native American statues, however, after we got off the main freeway and did some off roading down a narrow dirt road, we arrived at a trail entrance which obviously meant we had to walk from there to the site. Anyway, decided to google and a review online mentioned the 4hr trip this lady travelled. Um I don't think so, so we turned

around and headed on. We went to a place called Montezuma's Castle, a home built into the mountain around 1150. We arrived into Sedona and are here for 3 nights. Last night was a chuckwagon cowboy show and dinner which was fun. Even dad got into it singing loudly along with the crowd.



Having left behind the gunsmoke, brawls, immorality, and daily killings of Tombstone (not to mention the goings on in our motel), it was a pleasure to experience our first full day in the sumptuous luxury of our Scottsdale Hotel.

The Gainey Suites rooms were spacious, the showers worked efficiently, and there was no need to step over the bath to gain access - a difficult calisthenic exercise for some of us!

Breakfast was a pleasant surprise after the sugar filled delicacies of our previous stays. It offered fare more familiar with our Aussie tastes, and also real washable cutlery and crockery - rather than the plastic disposable type offered by most establishments previously.

During breakfast, Sergeant Roger Morgan did his daily pep talk advising us of sightseeing and route options for the day ahead - welcome advice for first time visitors like us.

It was a relaxed day with various activities undertaken individually by the group including:

- A "Boys' Toys" tour of the Penske Museum by the die hard motor enthusiasts. (Penske is the second largest motor dealer in the US. They employ some 26,000 staff and represent some 40 car marques including Rolls Royce, Bentley, McLaren, Porsche ... etc). Mum's the word if any orders were placed!
- A visit to the Cactus Botanical Gardens by many of the group. The gardens are spectacular in the variety of cacti species included, and the way they are presented. A popular venue with many pricks in evidence!
- Shopping at the mammoth fashion centre a few kilometres down the road, or at the factory outlets further afield. We chose the former in an attempt to replace Caroline's broken handbag. We couldn't find anything under US\$300 in the countless shops we called into, and were greeted by dirty, disdainful looks when asking if there was anything around the \$30 mark?? Clearly we were in the wrong end of town!
- A visit to the nearby Phoenician Golf Club to see how the rich live and try and play golf.
- Shopping for car parts. Some exciting items were purchased like "adjustable suspension bars". Most airlines offered a luggage allowance of two bags of 30Kg per person - so you may as well use it??

The day ended with the usual drinks/social gathering by the group in the hotel lounge. Here the hotel put on free drinks and a light meal between 5.00 and 7.00 pm which most of us took advantage of, to take some pressure off the credit cards which had worked hard earlier in the day.

All up, a busy day with good weather, giving us a welcome break from travelling between destination

Days 6,7 and 8

Dominic Truelove & Pauline Sercombe

We departed our luxurious accommodation quite late to travel the Morgan's recommended route of 202 miles.

Major roadworks near Morristown slowed our journey and we came across a sign to Pleasant Lake so decided to make a detour. We found a 30 square mile lake with great facilities including a large under cover marina.

Returning to the main road we passed through Wickenburg, known as the "Dude Ranch" capital of Arizona, then on to Prescott an old world town where some of our group were accosted by some political activists. Next stop was Jerome a former copper mining town with some very interesting old buildings perched on a cliff side, population in boom times aprox. 5,000 now around 400.

From Jerome we followed the very twisty road to the main Highway and on to our accommodation in Sedona.

Sedona Days 7 & 8

Day 7, together with the Currans, we did the Sedona Trolley Tour. Easy way to see the area with a guided tour. The morning run took us to Boynton and Fay Canyons. In the afternoon highlight was the Chapel of the Holy Cross, a very interesting piece of architecture. We topped off the day with a fabulous meal at Cucina Rustica Italian Restaurant.

Day 8. We had a rest day visiting the Sedona shops followed by a meal in a nearby Japanese restaurant



Days 6 and 7 - Sedona

Jeremy Braithwaite

Well if you were christened Jeremy you just had to visit Jerome which we did on the way in to Sedona. At Jerome we were busy photographing Wee Willie our travelling bear which prompted a conversation with a gentleman sitting nearby.

His name was Roman Kuzma and he proudly said he had spent time in Australia with Newman Haas and used to stay with Barry Sheene on the Gold Coast. Earlier he had been an Indycar team owner and had at one time been the March importer to the USA. Obviously quite a lad! You meet the best people when travelling with a bear!!

We loved Sedona. The weather didn't really help us and we spent our first day visiting all the scenery and 'taking a hike' as the locals say with the Bromleys. It snowed overnight just up the road and so we all decided to have a lazy day and do a bit of shopping.

The place to go is called the Tlaquepaque Arts Village. As that is completely unpronounceable it got re-christened 'Taccie Placcie'. It was however anything but and we saw some lovely pieces of art in a great place and enjoyed a lunch with good coffee in a deli up the road.

All the Jerome pics are here: <https://jbraithwaite.smugmug.com/Americas/USA/Arizona-AZ/Jerome-AZ/>

All the Sedona ones are here:

<https://jbraithwaite.smugmug.com/Americas/USA/Arizona-AZ/Sedona>

We thought we would spare the legs and try a couple of trolley rides around the area. Our guides were very friendly, informative and showed us some of the amazing sites on offer in this beautiful district.

If correct, the beauty starts with the name: Sedona, supposedly was the name of an early settlers' wife. He wanted to have a post office and hence needed a name for the new town. His first offering of a name was not accepted so he thought of his beautiful wife – Sedona.

So, from the beauty of the dessert, the mountains of every spectrum of orange, red, ochre and brown that stand like sentinels saying, “look at me”, “now look at me again from another side or in another light”, and gasp at how beautiful I am. To the Chapel of the Holy Cross, (the power of the Lord or the very wealthy artist women with government contacts)?

The houses blending into their coloured environment, the small and the opulent, all adding to the admiration of this very clean and loved town.

The town had an early history of cowboy and western movies being made in Sedona, bringing some very big screen stars from Hollywood and dollars to the area. Time saw them leave as well as the dollars, leaving the town to become creative and tempt the tourist. The range of tourist attractions to spend your money on, shops of every conceivable type. Arts and crafts, jewellery, clothes, chocolate, food, furniture, psychics and the vortex (not all can feel it) even a Christmas Shop. No tourist will miss out or not be happy with their visit to this clean, exceptional, welcoming, beautiful town that nestles easily into the natural beauty of the environment – the real “show stopper” of the area.

Our trip to Jerome, the hillside old town with a white “J” on the hill among the Black Hills sits at 1,500m and overlooks the Verde Valley back to Cottonwood. Some might say beauty is in the eyes of the beholder! For us it was more about gravity, having an engineering mind. How has this little town not slid off the mountain? Those old timers were either lucky or knew how to build on the side of cliffs. A test even for today's builders. Although we did find several buildings that have succumb to age and the gradient.



A muscle warming walk around the small shop and cottage lined streets that have been dug into the hills, or rising up from the steep slope below, showed the ability of people to adapt to change. From mining copper, with a population of some 10,000 at its peak, to about 500 in recent times.

Many buildings have been dressed up with a wide range of tourist attractions. Just the addition of bright plants adds a charm to the streetscape. The many old vehicles, some just cut in half and hung up in the air. Many relics from the past mining days. We are sure the old ghost town area has changed very little in the past 100 years. Apart from becoming smaller many parts of the town have retained some of the originality and atmosphere.

Thinking enough exercise had been done we drove the mountains heading towards Prescott.

Climbing to about 7,000 feet out of Jerome the flora changed to tall conifers and snow. Had to stop and play in the Arizona snow. Returning back to our Desert Quail Inn via another scenic road. Appropriately we did see desert quail and babies crossing the road.

Over the two days of being a tourist in Sedona the most popular words were – “WOW, WOW, look at that, OMG that is amazing, just amazing”. Sites never to be forgotten.



We were all asked to write a little article on what we did or thought of Sedona. The group stayed in Sedona three nights but sightseeing was basically limited to two days.

Robyn has been to Sedona five times before and simply loves the place and this was my fourth visit to the land of rocks, big rocks and it does make Ayres Rock somewhat small and lonely by comparison.

On the first morning Rob Clare and I decided to do the Bell Rock walking loop and gave ourselves approx. one hour to do the journey. One and three quarter hours later we arrived back at the motel feeling wonderful for the morning walk. No pollution so the lungs took in some great fresh air.

After a very leisurely breakfast we revisited the Church built into the rocks, the beautiful houses situated on the hills surrounding Sedona and admired the many Cactus gardens that are a feature of the area. We visited the Indian Jewellery stores and ended up at Tlaquepaque for some shopping. The shops contain many different and up market paintings and sculptures and the usual ladies fashion outlets. Fortunately we managed to escape with the bank balance still intact!

On day two, after another walk with Rob, we ventured outside Sedona to Montezuma Castle and to the Casino next door that has a diner, Johnny Rockets, which is straight out of the sixties complete



with a Jukebox on each table and milkshakes in those old tin containers.

That night Robyn and I celebrated our 37th wedding anniversary in a beautiful local Italian restaurant. We spotted the Currans and the Trueloves at another table having an equally good time.



One of the fabulous features of Sedona are the large number of different photo opportunities one gets as the sun hits the various rocks from sunrise to sunset.

Unfortunately for our group both days we overcast but the more enthusiastic photographers amongst us did get a few good shots when the sun broke through the clouds

Two great days in a wonderful location.

When you approach Sedona, the landscape changes dramatically from what we saw previously on the trip. Sedona is surrounded by rock formations.

First stop for us half an hour out of Sedona was the Montezuma Castle National Monument to look at the remains of the Sinagua people settlement carved out of the rock face some thousand years ago.

Day 8 – Flagstaff

Stephen & Jill Knox

The weather was a bit grim today and we headed for Flagstaff to enjoy the drive, follow some of Route 66, albeit for a very short distance and so Jill could visit two well known craft shops, Michael's and Joann's.

The drive from Sedona to Flagstaff was stunning as it followed the river, but all the more so because it snowed quite heavily as we approached the highest parts. Shacks, even at lower elevations had deep snow on their roofs, the forest floors were white and the Ponderosa pines were like giant Christmas trees.

Route 66 runs through the centre of Flagstaff and so did we, although saying we've 'done' the famous road would be a gross exaggeration - unless a couple of miles qualifies. (We were not far from Winslow, Arizona and I was considering driving there, standing on the corner and waiting for 'a girl, my Lord, in a flat bed Ford slowing down to take a look at me', but I'm sure I would have been disappointed, so we spent some Pacific pesos in the craft shops and returned to Oak Creek.

Close to home we visited the Church of the Holy Cross, a modernist structure built amongst the beautiful rock formations. I doubt if it would be granted planning permission today. It would be like building a church between two of the Three Sisters.

A fun dinner in the pub with the Dovers at a table, conveniently located between the doors to the Men's and Ladies' toilets, sorry, 'restrooms' and dodging the elbows and cues of delightfully accommodating and good natured pool players.

*'Take it Easy' by the Eagles, but you knew that, didn't you.



Day 9 – Sedona to Kayenta

John & Sonia Curran

On our way from Sedona via Flagstaff we drove through the Oak Creek Valley & the Sterling Canyon on some very scenic roads.

The Grand Canyon, what can we say, no adjective, no exclamation can describe the sights before us? I am sure we said “WOW, WOW” many times, “magnificent”, “look at that”, dozens of times, “amazing” etc, etc. This visit was for us the most scenic, beautiful, life time experience of all!

We battled the car parks, but once a spot was found, off we went. Walking the rim in several places, reading every display, trying to image the native people existing in this hostile but amazing region. How was it all formed, just too much information to take in as the brain was focused on the visual magnificence.

It was a surprise to see the trains coming up to the Park. Even more a surprise to see elk just walking around anywhere they felt like. Taking care of the odd disobedient tourist that dare to come too close with a pesky camera. Also, the helicopters are not allowed over the Canyon or above any group of people. So even though this was perhaps one of the busiest days it was actually reasonably quiet.

At times it felt as though most of the countries on earth were visiting. So many different languages, we think by the exclamations and gestures all saying much the same as us. So many people from all over the world happy in the wonder of this amazing place.

Driving on towards Kayenta we stopped at every look out to view yet another aspect of the Canyon.

You just had to take another look it was always different. The view from the Desert View Watchtower was amazing. The Tower itself a beacon on the edge of a precipice to gain an even greater view of the expanse below and across the valleys to the plateaus beyond many miles away.

We have a very small “Bucket List”, the Grand Canyon was a may be. Really it should be up in the top of anybody’s list.

Driving on to Kayenta and leaving such a breathtaking place, left the remaining journey rather ordinary after we exited the Canyon escarpment areas. But still many pretty things turned up around every corner. Driving along we were constantly talking about our location and its relation to the Grand Canyon. Visualising our position on the level plateau above and beyond the Canyon drops.

At the borders edge of Arizona still so many amazing sites. We have written a list of things to google and research when we are back home, especially about the native people and how Kayenta will survive the down scaling of the mining industry in its area.

There is a Coal mine operated by the Peabody Group South of Kayenta that employs around 350 local people that supplies coal to the Salt River Power plant at Page, the coal is transported some 100 miles on a private rail line. Unfortunately, the plant & mine are being shut down in October this year.

Our “DRY” hotel was very comfortable, and it was good to see the local people being employed in the tourism industry, all had a very committed attitude. Well most of them.

We all had been warned that some of the people would be up front in asking for a hand-out. We were caught by one as we were taking some money very carefully out of our bag. A fellow with a big glowing smile turned up out of nowhere. “Hey misses have you got any spare money”. Well I snapped back very aggressively “no, go away”. Reminded me of my attitude to Telstra.

WHAT A DAY!!! A day that is to be talked about for some time.



The weather could not have been better not a cloud in the sky as we turned on to route 163 headed to Monument Valley visitors centre. Before arriving we were we were overawed by the first of many magnificent monuments each named to portray a certain meaning to the Navajo people.

The next 12 miles provided many rest spots from which could be viewed the many Mesas, Buttes and Spires which is how these monuments are described depending on their stage of erosion.

The geography changed as we approached Mexican Hat from the red sand and monuments to a more round boulders with a grey rather than red appearance. On reaching Bluff the vegetation took on a scarce scrubby look much like that found in parts of Western NSW.

Blanding, which hosted a dinosaur museum, was the beginning of agriculture with crops being irrigated by overhead sprays. Monticello was the largest town we encountered on route 191 which we had been travelling since leaving the 163 near Bluff.

The landscape changed again from Monticello where we found open grazing, the vegetation looking very much like saltbush which is found in abundance in western NSW and northern Victoria.

The drive from here to Moab offered spectacular views of snow-capped mountains with 3 outstanding rocks. Church Rock and Wilson Arch rising out of the relatively flat land.

Altogether a very scenic drive on very good and often winding roads.

Day 11 – A Day in Moab

Laurie & Fran Bromley

Moab is situated in southern Utah. It is a small town of around 5,000 permanent residents which swells enormously with tourists visiting the nearby Arches and Canyonlands National Parks. Outdoor recreation, off roading, hiking and canoeing all have their place. The town was established as a trading centre and a crossing point of the Colorado River. The relocation of the railroad away from the town led to its downsizing until the discovery of uranium led to a new boom in the fifties. This proved short lived and the town declined again with tourism and a little agriculture being the main reason for its now prosperity. We were in Moab on Veterans Day, the busiest day of the year and the traffic was heavy along the main street, with lots of RVs, most of which would have been illegal in Australia, with tyres protruding from body work, no doors and no rear seat belts. We saw many huge fifth wheelers the size of semi-trailers transiting the town. There was also a Morgan club event with several Morgans around the streets. We saw some new three wheelers for sale (not Morgans), a cute design with no mudguards and headlights concealed behind the grill.

It was Monaco Grand Prix day so several of our enthusiasts began the day at 6am, gathered around a boomerang shaped table to watch Ricardo do not much and British driver Hamilton winning. All stood for the rendition of God Save The Queen.

We had a quiet morning with laundry duties and a walk to the Art and Craft festival in the local park. A fine sandwich of Reuben corned beef and surprisingly good coffee before an afternoon siesta.

We were told that the Arches National Park, a must see in Moab, would be packed with long delays to get in and nowhere to park. Some elected to get there early to beat the rush, others including ourselves, waited till 4 pm. The wait was relatively short and the crowds quite manageable the park was spectacular with semi desert terrain and massive red sandstone monoliths. True to its name there were several natural arches.

Towards the end we followed a foot trail through a narrow gap about 60 cms wide, between huge solid rock walls at least 30 m high. This spread out to a defile about 10 m across with red sandy floor and the enormous rock walls. We followed for about 100 m to a wider section with a spectacular natural arch on one side the trail continued between the rock walls but we turned back. I must have taken a hundred photos of the formations, but I was travelling with the Braithwaite's who took many more than me. Jeremy's photos will all be available on his Smug mug site.

We got back about 8pm in time to join the group for a BBQ in the outdoor area of the hotel. This was a popular venue for our group, and the home cooked BBQ was a better option to the largely disappointing cuisine available at local restaurants. The restaurant fare on the trip was unremarkable, with occasional good meals. One notable cultural difference for us was the reasonably priced meals for sale which quickly became expensive by the time we converted to Australian dollars, added in local taxes and the ubiquitous tip ranging from 18% to 25%.!

Day 12 – Moab to Cedar City

Roger & Tess Morgan

An early morning start from Moab, following Mr President, both heading to a fuel stop to fill the car to the brim before heading out onto the I-70.

The geology outside Moab continues to amaze, as did our second visit late afternoon yesterday to Arches National Park. There are some amazing photos on the website, words cannot do this place justice. We were advised to visit late in the day but there were still queues to get in – we waited about 30 mins, luckier than some yesterday who were turned away as the park was full by 10.30am.

On the I-70 towards Green River, it looked like a lunar landscape with towering limestone cliffs and fossil rich beds. We saw Ghost Rock at an elevation of 7250ft, now passing pink and cream sandstone cliffs.

A rest stop was called for – oh no it's a rustic long-drop facility. Never mind close your eyes and hope for the best, whilst soaking in the view, we spotted an Australian cattle dog and a Queensland Cattle Dog – not our only encounter with Aussie breeds on this trip. We chatted with their owners, whilst we were warmly wrapped in coats and scarves, the locals wore shorts and thongs! The view was of Eagle Canyon which 50 million years, or so, ago was the then sea bed (get photo from my camera).

On our way with menacing black clouds to our left we chased El Presidente earning a reputation as the fastest “Nissun” in the west, enjoying the freedom of a freeway blast as we raced against the oncoming black clouds. As the ochre of the cliffs contrasted with the green of the valleys the cold front heralded by the black cloud swept in from the South West. Would we beat the storm and breast the range before the “weather” arrived.

The answer was no, although early explorers, such as the Knoxs and Morgans “enjoyed” – not the correct word slightly better weather.

When was the last time you were driving and the temperature dropped by 30deg F in just ten miles? Snow and sleet greeted us as drove up the range heading for Salina, the outside temperature was 34deg F and were at 7000 ft altitude. El Presidente was away on his skis up front, as we battled the unexpected wintry conditions. Locals told us they had never had weather like this in May, its usually 100 F and very dry

We experienced an almost 60 f drop in temperature over the Moab – Salina mileage in part due to the normal 3 F temperature drop per one thousand feet of altitude gain, and in part due to the cold front from the South West which led to snow, ice and freezing temperatures.

Refreshments were needed – preferably hot refreshments, - the Knoxs and Morgans finding a Subway with no hot drinks first and then finding the rest of the gang who had found a very busy, packed to the rafters, Dennys – this being the day after the Memorial Day weekend.....They had found the first available hot food roadside stop. We compared notes for the trip over the range, and decided we had passed through just before it became really dicey. Thankfully all arrived safely with an unusual story to tell over the next decade or so.

On to Richfield, as the name implied green fertile well-irrigated land and another brief spell of warm-ish rain as we joined the I-15S into Cedar City.

A very interesting day.....not to be repeated



Day 13 – Bryce Canyon

Stephen & Jill Knox

Most club members would remember the name Lennox Walker, famously a long range weather forecaster, long before computer modelling. I can't recall if he was any good at it but he might have been helpful to Tess and Roger and eventually to the participants in the Morgans' Magical Mountain Meander. Our organisers told us, not without justification, that we should expect temperatures in the nineties (Fahrenheit) and beyond. They did suggest taking an extra layer for the high altitudes, but we would be travelling in late-Spring, so nothing too heavy.

A warning from Jeremy and Julie that there had been eight inches of snow in Denver, just a week before we were to arrive in Phoenix, probably led to a last minute windcheater being added to most bags. We're very glad we did. Locals told us that May temperatures were up to 20°F cooler than normal and snow



was a regular sight.

Roger had suggested a 'buddy' system of travelling together, especially in the more remote areas such as the evocatively named Loneliest Road in America where a puncture could be a serious problem in our spare-tireless renters. The Morgans took that a step further today and we left our car behind and accompanied them to Bryce Canyon. Conrad and Caroline joined us in their car.

We left at the crack of dawn - about 9 - from Cedar City and headed over the mountain. Evidence of an overnight snow fall lay around us and a light dusting was soon hitting our windscreen. By 6,000 feet we were driving through heavy snow as Roger watched the outside temperature fall through the mid thirties. We agreed that we'd go no further if the thermometer reached 32. At 31 we were sure the summit was close and there was no sign of black ice on the roads. Snow was banked high on the roadside where the snowplough had very recently cleared

the road. At 7,700 feet and 30°F we reached the peak and the temperature started rising as the elevation fell. A close call. (Others who set out not long after us had to follow the snowplough over the mountain to get through.)

Bryce Canyon National Park was not nearly as busy as Grand Canyon, partly due to the doubtful weather forecast. (Other travellers told us the canyon was completely full of fog yesterday and the delights of Bryce were totally hidden from view. Not for the first time, nor the last, we were extremely fortunate with the weather.) 'Breathtaking' is one of the most overused and exaggerated descriptions used in travel brochures. Very few sights in the world take your breath away when you see them for the first time but Bryce does. I'll always remember walking up to the rim of the Canyon, looking down and catching my breath. The view is as unexpected as it is spectacular and photos cannot do it justice (although Jeremy gives it a good shot with his beautiful portfolio).

Access to the main viewing areas was typically good and we wandered around the park, congratulating ourselves on finding spaces in the not-too-busy parking areas. The inevitable documentary in the visitor centre with its equally inevitable gift store explained the formation of the canyon, after which we headed off for lunch.

Back in Cedar City we gathered in - no, commandeered - the motel's reception area for traditional TSCC pre-dinner drinks that for some also became post-dinner drinks and for one or two couples, instead-of-dinner drinks.

Jill had discovered a craft shop adjacent to the accommodation and I found some rather cool cast iron wall mounted bottle openers with Route 66 motifs. Knowing Terry's interest in the famous road, I suggested that he part with the very reasonable asking price of \$5 to adorn the Cranston Road cabana. He showed it to others and soon a steady stream of men added weight to the luggage, a conversation piece to their bars and unexpected turnover to the Carson City craft shop.



In the years following this fabulous trip, the memories of some parts will merge and details will blur, but I'll always remember my first sight of Bryce Canyon.

Day 14 – Las Vegas

Julie and Jeremy Braithwaite

Well there is a saying that what happens in Vegas always stays in Vegas. There's another saying that rules are meant to be broken ... so here goes.

The whole place really is America in a nutshell. Everything that is gross and gaudy is there on display and coated with sugar. But we absolutely loved the [Cirque de Soleil Beatles](#) show. It was just FANTASTIC and one of our highlights of the trip.

And the strip was great to photograph at night with lots of lights and the fountain at Bellagio was brilliant. The lights on the first night are [here](#) and on the second night are [here](#). The movie file is [here](#).

All the boys just had to go to the Shelby Museum and Factory where we received a great tour of the place and met Vince LaViolette who is the VP Operations and Chief Test Driver. At the start of the tour we were all asked how many Shelby's we had and John Bailey rattled off quite a few and needed to be reminded about the Super Snake! I'm sure he loved all the Grabber Blue cars as much as we did.



The hotel in Cedar City was so nice we were in no rush to leave. An early morning walk revealed a series of Car yards selling Mustangs , Corvettes etc. and at the prices they are asking one can only wonder why we poor Australians have to pay so much for our cars!

Our agenda today was a little different to most others as we decided to go via Zion National Park and then onto the freeway to Las Vegas and arrive late in the afternoon. So we spent several hours at Zion admiring the large cliffs and trying to photograph the same. They are just so big that without a special camera it is hard to capture the size of the Zion Park Canyons but I suggest you check Jeremy's photos as I am sure he would have managed the impossible. Can't beat a special lens. Whilst I enjoyed Zion I thought Monument Canyon, Bryce Canyon and Arches National Park were better.

After a few hours in the park we joined the freeway to Las Vegas. The freeway itself was a great driving road and it wound itself between massive rocks and then through deserts and then around and through rocks again, Unfortunately, very few places to stop to admire the scenery and that special photo. It wasn't long before Las Vegas loomed on the horizon, a lot larger than I recall. This my eighth visit to this city and will probably be my last as it really is all about gambling and the ritzy lifestyle. It's just not my scene anymore but I can appreciate why it attracts so many tourist.

We elected not to go straight to the ARIA hotel but went in search of yet another factory outlet. As with all things in Las Vegas it was big and everything was sharply discounted so the remainder of the afternoon was spent wandering through this amazing outlet and yes we brought a few more things we didn't need!

I believe we were the last to arrive and by the time we got to our room it was after 7.00 pm with a warning from those already booked in. Don't open the mini bar as it works on a sensor and automatically charges your account even if you don't consume the item. We didn't!

Some of the group had pre arranged to go to a show whilst others enjoyed the Buffett (after an extensive wait). Robyn and I went to the Pizza Café and shared a rather large Pizza. How you could eat a Pizza on your own is another discussion.

After diner we strolled along the strip in very pleasant weather admiring the many artificial structures. The New York / New York Casino is built to resemble parts on New York and it does that so very well. A quick look inside and all you saw was wall to wall pokies all bristled with new technology. And the same in every other hotel we visited.

No hotel breakfast would have been complete for me on this trip without some friendly verbal sparring with Roger. This having been accomplished to our mutual satisfaction and much laughter it was time for us all to bid farewell to the joys of Las Vegas! It is widely agreed to be a place you have to see but need never go back to. Our sentiment exactly.

Konrad and I hit the highway heading for Ely and the Prospector Hotel and Gambling Hall. Because of Konrad's exceptional driving skills and thus my frequent breaks from navigating due to being fast asleep I do not have much to write about the actual journey. I did see some great clouds in a couple of wakeful episodes! We stopped for a bite to eat in Austin opposite the famous church which featured in the classic "Vanishing Point". The lady serving us was an absolute character- just what one would expect in one of these quaint American towns in the middle of nowhere.

Driving through the tiny town of Lund (population in the census in 2010 was a massive 282!) its main feature appeared to be the very creepy wooden house made-to-order for horror movies. Stephen King, send out your location scouts!

What a joy it was to arrive at the Prospector Hotel and to be greeted by music from our own era! The Morgans had described it well. An absolute feast of visual oddities awaited us, from the stuffed mountain lion with its own biography to the very strange couple propped up on chairs near the entrance. She is known as Katherine, a Bohemian Lady. She appears to be more of a botched taxidermy job! Her companion is about four times her size – I am sure he is someone famous but I couldn't identify him. They were both charmingly hideous!

I managed to get a flattering photo of Roger's stunning legs as he was stroking his new bronze puppy. Bronze animals were abundant here – lions, dogs....

This Casino (low key gambling I think) even catered for motorbike enthusiasts. There was a whole section near reception which was dedicated to bright shiny two-wheelers of the motorised variety.

The only blight on our stay in this quaint hotel was a very rude woman in the gift shop who behaved and spoke as though we were all potential thieves. Tess wisely took her money elsewhere and purchased a beautiful turquoise necklace from a far friendlier shop!

It happened to be Robyn's birthday the night we stayed there so we all had dinner together. There was a birthday at the next table with a Mexican theme. We told them about Robyn and next thing we knew she and Terry were sporting sombreros and being serenaded. A very friendly bunch those Mexican men were!

An aspect of American hotel stays that was unfamiliar to us is dogs staying in the rooms with their owners. From miniatures to Mastiffs we saw them all! We had a great end to the evening when we had just gone back to our room and a very deep bark started up in the corridor outside. The owner quietened the dog and someone with a quick sense of humour opened their door and sang out "who let the dawgs out?".

My experiences and the great company on this holiday exceeded expectations. Roll on the next one!

We scooted though Eureka, some stopping for breakfast but we pushed on to Austin. The last 6- or 7-miles spectacular driver's roads with sweeping bends affording magnificent views of the next 50 miles laid out before us. Perfect for sports car driving, although the Nissans are doing pretty well, even in Eco mode. We realised at this point that Nicky Knacky Knox (NKK) - Stephen wanted to overtake and off he went, leading us to our breakfast stop. The sign for the Toiyabe café loomed large as we see the sign for 6575 ft elevation, steep downhill and 25mph warning signs into Austin.

Opting for breakfast pancakes and yet more fairly undrinkable coffee we were entertained by a slightly cranky café owner. Strolling in the deserted street looking for the "Vanishing Point" church photo op we see Jeremy and Julie and then John and Sonia arrive. More of our friends take up the parking spaces in the deserted street (see photo) and we set out for a shopping spree, - well you have to help the local economy don't you?

What Roger, my driver finds absolutely astonishing is how shop keepers almost universally consign their best bargains - those with the enormous saving opportunities to small expensive stores in remote locations. Robyn Daly usually being the one to find these first, as is often recounted by Terry, her personal driver. But on this trip the Morgan, Knox and Clare teams beat the Daly tour bus to three beautiful handcrafted turquoise pendants from the blue diamond mine – the saving grace for my "Current driver" Morgan is that the trip participants coughed up the dough for my exquisite piece, for which I thank you all.... my driver was also very happy about that – but I found another bargain later in Virginia City which was purchased with the balance of gifted funds.

Out of Austin driving on to Fallon on a beautifully re-surfaced and widened road past lush green fields. Glancing at the Sierra Nevada foothills we see threatening black rain clouds to the south and a few more cars on the road. We pass the Pony Express station at Cold Springs; the mail being delivered across county by this method for only one year in 1860/1861.

Soon (it didn't seem like soon) we are in Fallon for almost drinkable Coffee, a toilet break, a snack at Maccas and just under one hour later we are in Carson City, Nevada, and bed after Burritos beckons with that Charming Chap NKK and his lovely wife.

Tomorrow Virginia City, the Comstock Lode before driving on to Lake Tahoe.



Day 18 – Carson City to Lake Tahoe

Laurie & Fran Bromley

After breakfast, we left Carson City for Silver City. It was an interesting drive up a twisty mountain road to the city, a bit reminiscent of the scenery around Jerome and Tombstone.

Silver City was immensely wealthy in its day. Most of the buildings date from the boom of mid nineteenth century. In the 1860' s, the population was about 1,200. By the 1890s the population had risen to about 30,000 and today it is about 200! The old buildings are largely still in use. The wooden footpaths are still a feature. The Old Bucket of Blood Saloon has a beautiful Victorian era feel, with period coloured glass lamps lighting the interior. Being a Sunday, many tourists were in town and many local tourists dressed in western gear, complete with six guns, shotguns and rifles paraded the streets. I don't think the guns were fakes either.

We boarded a tractor train for a guided tour and were joined by Rob and Sue Clare

The guide told us some history about the discovery of gold. After the first rush, someone analysed the blue clay tailings from the first mines and found they were incredibly rich in gold silver and copper, thus sparking a second mining boom. The Comstock lode was world famous for its mineral wealth !

Samuel Clemens worked there as a journalist for a few years. He challenged someone to a duel but luckily, he was told duelling was illegal and as he was a bad shot his life was preserved and he went on to write books using the nom de plume Mark Twain.

Most of the shops are now tourist meccas but there were some nice rock and jewellery shops. We had a nice lunch, recommended to us by a local of tri tips (smoked roast beef slices on a roll with gravy).

Terry saw lots of sixties cars in driveway in Carson City, mostly in "original "condition. Jeremy had to go the car museum in Reno, where he was joined by many others in the group.

The short drive to South Lake Tahoe occupied the afternoon, with a cycle fun ride slowing us down along the shores of the lake.

South Lake Tahoe town is right on the border of California and Nevada with the casinos and gas stations on the Nevada side.

“Let’s take a drive around the lake” was how the conversation started. “we don’t need a map, it’s easy””.

70 miles later it’s clear that someone had moved the lake. Time to consult the oracle and see where the budding google map reader says we might be. Oh yes, heading towards Sacramento on Highway 50, which whaddyaknow doesn’t go around the lake.

Find a suitable place for a U-Turn, another brief discussion of how much of this is Tess’s fault, but I guess the El Dorado State Forest, a waterfall, together with seeing the Annual Hwy 50 Wagon Train commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Gold Rush, was a reasonable reward for a wrong turn.

We did finally find the lake and stopped at the Tallac Historic Estate, for a thoughtfully provided picnic. We visited the Baldwin House, built with fortunes amassed by E.J. “Lucky” Baldwin. A billionaire in today’s money, an investor, real estate speculator and a pioneer. This summer retreat for the wealthy families of Southern California was enchanting.

Back at the Hotel the evening drinks were in the club room we had taken over again, and Jeremy invited all of us outside to the picture perfect backdrop of Lake Tahoe for our group tour photo.

Tomorrow we use a map

Day 19 – Lake Tahoe to Mariposa

Konrad Dover same driver

The initial plan to drive through a major part of Yosemite en route from Lake Tahoe to Mariposa was scuttled before we arrived in the States by unseasonably late snowfalls. 8-foot-deep snowdrifts had forced the National Parks Board to close all but the southern part of the park till after our tour had ended.

Two routes were open for the drive crossing the Sierra Nevada from Lake Tahoe to Mariposa and the open southern entrance to Yosemite: The “high” road; and the “higher” road.

As there was still a risk of further snow blocking these routes, we decided to heed Sergeant Morgan’s daily alert/advice and use the lower (longer) road – even though some brave gamblers decided to use the higher, more direct road.

We decided to travel with the Morgans and Knoxes, and set off from Lake Tahoe shortly after 8.00am, with the objective of a late breakfast stop in Jackson.

The drive over the Sierra Nevada was spectacular with a variety of landscapes including snow covered mountains, lakes, and forests, reaching the main street of Jackson about 10.00am. The town seemed very quiet, and most of the shops were closed, even though it was a weekday. The party scattered as our priority was finding loos to empty our bladders!

Mission accomplished, we could think straight again to find a coffee shop, but were told by a local the town shops only opened at 11.00am?? (my kind of town!) At this point, the Bromleys, Braithwaites, and Clares arrived with the same idea. As the only open option was a Denny’s fast food outlet (the first US doughnut chain – but no longer offers doughnuts on its menu??), we all adjourned there for our supersize portions of sugar-filled fast food. My double toasted bacon & cheese sandwich with coffee was a bargain at \$8!

Back on the road to Mariposa, things went well until some family decided to move house literally (on the back of two oversize flatbed trucks) over a narrow bridge, causing an extended traffic jam and delay.

After checking in to our motel in Mariposa, we decided to leave at 4.00pm with the Morgans, Knoxes, and John Bailey, for an early evening visit to Yosemite – thus hopefully avoiding the crowds.

The talk in Mariposa was about Dominic and Pauline’s red Mustang, which hooked up with another orange Mustang floozie that afternoon – and talked her into spending the night!

A little bit of rain in the park did not dampen our enthusiasm to absorb the splendour of Yosemite – another natural wonder.

At dusk, we headed back for the 1.5-hour drive to our Mariposa motel.

Rumour has it that, at the insistence of their spouse, one of our party had to fill up at a rural gas station where petrol cost 40 cents a gallon more than in Mariposa, even though there was enough fuel in the tank for the trip back – just to be sure, to be sure.



Day 21 –Mariposa to Carmel-by-the-Sea

Stephen & Jill Knox

Mariposa was a pleasant village and an ideal stepping off point for the southern section of Yosemite which we experienced yesterday. (This was our first visit to Yosemite and it was the sheer scale that blew us away. Our son summed it up when he said when he and some mates visited and saw the massive El Capitan, a gigantic rock soaring skyward. It seemed fairly close to the road and decided to walk to the base. They walked and walked but never seemed to get any closer. The scale plays tricks on the mind.)

The drive out of Mariposa was beyond scenic and had it been Day 1 or 2 we would have stopped at every 'vista point' for a photograph. This countryside deserved all the photos you could take but I'm afraid we got a little blasé.

A number of times Jill and I commented on the wonderful American road system with exits clearly numbered and long ramps that allowed easy and safe egress. Today we were back in the real world, at least for a while. Our route eventually took us off the Interstates and State Roads and into farming country. It was almost a relief to drive over rutted and broken roads that carried heavy farm traffic. It made me feel quite homesick.

Once again, scale was impressive. The orchards were home to thousands and thousands of trees and strawberry farms the size of small countries. In one field we saw a long row of pickers, probably 'visitors' from south of the border, bent double as they stripped the bushes clean.

Our destination was Carmel-by-the-Sea, lodgings for the last two nights of our odyssey which were in a quaint, pink, higgledy piggledy hotel, a short walk from the centre of this stylish, expensive and exclusive village, famous for once having Clint Eastwood as its mayor.

Five o'clock drinks were in John and Sonya Curran's room (they were volunteered again for tomorrow night) and eight of us found a beautiful restaurant and had another wonderful night.

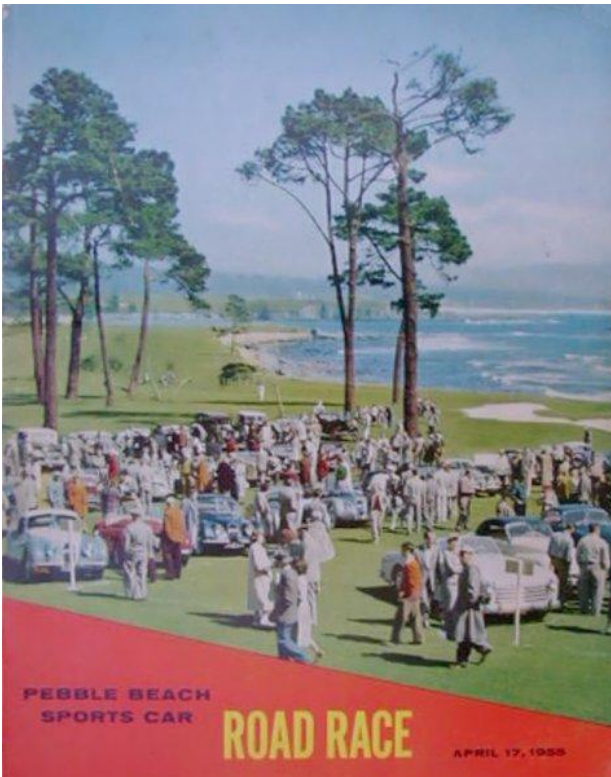
One day to go!

Day 22 – Carmel

Jeremy & Julie Braithwaite

We'd stayed at Pacific Grove when we raced at the [Monterey Historics](#) in 1995 and it was really great to go back and visit a place that remains so strong in our memories. We dropped in to [Laguna Seca](#) on the way into Carmel and bought Terry a sticker for his Laguna Seca Mustang

But the thing we were really looking forward to seeing were the sea otters in the kelp beds and at the Monterey Aquarium. They are just adorable and have struggled back from near extinction at the hands of trappers after their fur. The population in the wild remains around 3,000 which is pretty much the number we remember from two decades before.



What had changed was the large kelp bed in the bay in Pacific Grove which was healthy in [1995](#) and nowhere to be seen today. We had hired canoes and paddled out into the bay.

However on the positive side we did see a number of [otters](#) rafted up in a kelp bed further down the coast. Just lovely!

Between Monterey and Carmel, if you follow the coast, is 17 Mile Drive. It's actually a loop road that goes past Pebble Beach at the Carmel end and Pacific Grove at the northern end. In the 1950's it was the venue for a road race. Today the motoring heritage continues with the Pebble Beach Concours. We were lucky enough to see some of the winners at the [Nethercutt Museum](#) in Santa Clarita. We stayed in a very quaint pink hotel in Carmel and the nearest restaurant of any note was the Bistro Giovanni and this is where we all ended up for our last night together.

What a trip! The whole group really gelled and everybody had a wonderful time. Hats off to Tess and Roger for months and months of work to make it possible!

Day 23 – Carmel to LAX – Finale - The Longest Day

Roger & Tess Morgan

After a sumptuous meal, much laughter and conversation last night at Bistro Giovanni's in Carmel by the Sea, we said our farewells outside our quaint pink hued hotel. All were going their separate ways in the morning, most of us keen to extend their holiday just a few more days. Many and varied were the plans!

The Morgan and Knoxs elected to leave early and beat the rush to Los Angeles airport.

We stopped at the Shell gas station in Carmel - one of the prettiest we have ever seen, with a cute wooden sign and flowers around the forecourt. Probably one of their first customers at just past 7am.

Well, Google and others said it should take about 6 hrs or so taking the scenic route. Haha. We should have known better! That's not counting the crawl into LA for the last few miles, and the landslips along the Big Sur coastal road.

It's a good job the Knoxs were staying the night in an LA hotel before an early morning flight and the Morgans had a 9pm departure to the UK. So, leaving at 7am should be fine, right?

Taking Highway 1 the coast road, a scenic undulating drive of around 334 miles. Big Sur, San Simeon, a surprise stop to see the Elephant Seal colony at Vista Point, on to Cambria, Santa Barbara and the hoped-for easy drive down the freeway to the Alamo Car rental at Inglewood near LAX.

The first part of the plan went quite well, little traffic on the road early, even after being held up by roadworks a couple of times and by 9.30am we were in Cambria for a rest stop.

Challenge no.1, find somewhere open.... at last we spot a diner, but a helpful waiter found it hard to understand we'd really like a hot drink, not a lukewarm coffee or tea. So, we opted for Hot Chocolate (without the huge squiggle of cream on top).

Refreshed and revived we are on our way south with a lunch stop planned in 2hrs time in Santa Maria and then the anticipated couple of hours to Inglewood. This is where the plan deviated somewhat. Despite El Presidente Knox have mapped out the perfect route, we had seriously underestimated the volume of traffic heading south on Highway 1/101 on a Friday afternoon.

Despite taking a diversion which took us through the outskirts of Santa Barbara to the freeway south, the 6 lane freeway was incredibly busy. What should have been a couple of hours eventually taking more than four and a half. The last 30 miles into Inglewood being particularly memorable since it's the first 8 or 10 lane freeway we've ever driven at what seemed like walking pace.

Sometimes we felt joggers would comfortably overtake us without being out of breath. What can we say, driving into LA on a Friday afternoon is only for the brave or the foolhardy.

Never have we been so relieved and excited to pull into a car rental depot at 6.00pm. What was impressive was just how fast we were out, on the shuttle and deposited at the airport.

We said our goodbyes to Stephen and Jill and we would like to thank them for being kind enough to travel with us over the past few days, it has been great to have their company.

WhatsApp messages flying thick and fast from everyone, letting all know the traffic issues, several of our friends also on the LA crawl, the smart ones flying from San Francisco!

WhatsApp messaging system was a fantastic idea Jeremy – thanks for that helping everyone keep in touch throughout the trip - it's been a real bonus.

So many great memories and our thanks to everyone for making this such a wonderful experience, we truly have had such fun!