

Another type of golfing venue is to combine a group trip and tag on a few rounds of golf on the way to and from the destination. The Shorecliff ladies club is the perfect example. It doesn't take very long to realize they absolutely enjoy the company of each other, there is a proportional increase of the decibel level in the club house after their rounds of golf. Wine may be of some influence with their audibly measured pleasure. So when the idea of a road trip up to San Luis Obispo county area was proposed there were plenty of volunteers. The group has made this pilgrimage for the last seven years and is comprised of between 7 and 12 couples', yes they allow the husbands to participate just as long as they are not too much of a nuisance.

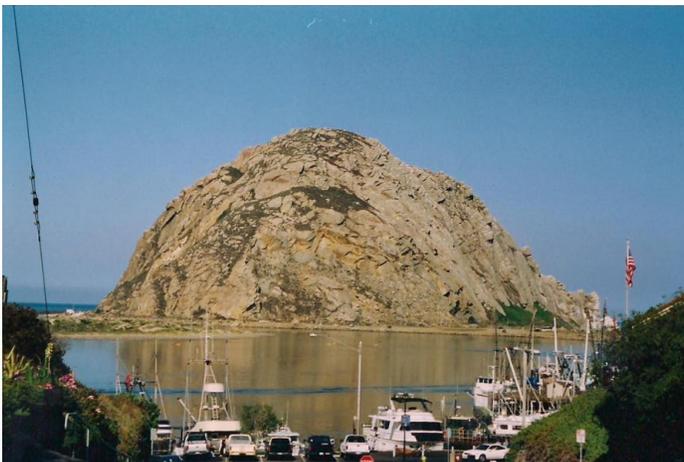
DAY 1 The intent was to play the Seabee course in Port Hueneme on the way north, however some dummy (me) neglected to put the new registration in the glove compartment. Since 9/11 the security on military base courses has become an absolute necessity. Drivers' license or some proof of identity, current auto insurance and registration are required to access the facility. Anyway we had to cancel that tee time and were fortunate enough to head up the road and move up the next days' round at The River Course at Alisal which is just outside of Solvang. Changing hotel reservation can be a hassle, but as we were returning this was later in the week, things worked out for the best. Moral of the story, try and make your registration flexible (cancelable).

DAY 2 Our kids joined us in Avila Beach, a must visit tiny beach community just up the road from Pismo Beach. An old friend of ours who lives in Avila was home, so with the open day we had an even better chance to catch up on the latest gossip, did a little bar hopping, and being partial to beach communities and their atmosphere made for a terrific visit. La Serena Inn in Morro Bay has been very good for us. I'm sure they appreciate the chunk of business the group brings each year so consequently the room rates are very attractive as is the hotel on the bluff just above the embarcadero. Another night with the kids in one of our favorite towns! The group begins to arrive, we've set in a ton of hors'd ouvres and lots to drink. There is a thirst upon the land!

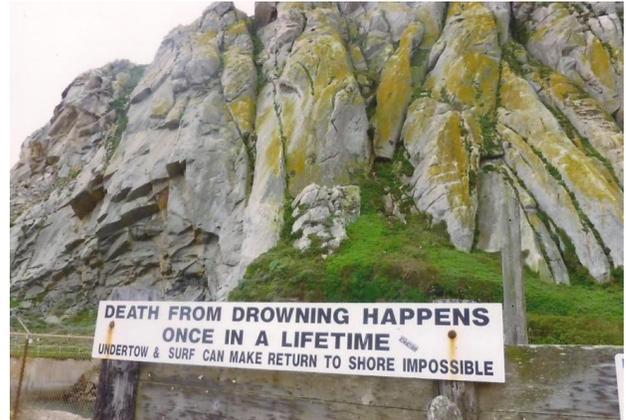


DAY 3 The Links at Paso Robles is somewhat removed from where we are staying, but as it is located deep in wine country there are innumerable excuses as to why it took so long getting back to the hotel after golf. There are in excess of 100 wineries in the area according the chamber of commerce pamphlet and map. Some of the group, being self-proclaimed connoisseurs of the grape, braggarts though they be, take full advantage of this opportunity returning home with multiple cases of the smaller vintners product. We on the other hand take advantage of the liquor store behind the hotel. They have a section dedicated to the local wineries and the prices are very attractive if not better than the tasting rooms. That movie "Sideways" has made a huge impact on this region, both from a tourist and wine sales perspective. The group returns and gathers in our room to partake of their latest purchases Once the noise level reaches a certain crescendo everyone heads out for the embarcadero and the myriad restaurants and watering holes sitting alongside the harbor.

DAY 4 The caravan heads out for the Avila Beach Resort Golf Course after a hearty motel breakfast. Morro Rock is impressive, but there are a total of seven rocks running in a line south to San Luis Obispo that really lend a sense of power and strength along the route. There is a sign at the beach just below the rock, "Death from drowning happens once in a life time," this references the strong undertow and surf conditions that make it impossible to return to the beach, pretty interesting, Aye. Once again the clarion cry of the sea gull announcing it must be time for eats. A window seat overlooking the bay, an array of commercial and pleasure boats at anchor, harbor seals arfing back and forth, the scent of the changing tide, again the gulls insistent crying for something, the rock itself either shrouded in thick fog or the back drop for a sunset provided by that quintessential painter, all provide a pleasant closing to the day. The mood, the setting, the libation all lend themselves to a bit of creative writing, so break out the pen and post cards and let the world know you are enjoying this paradise.



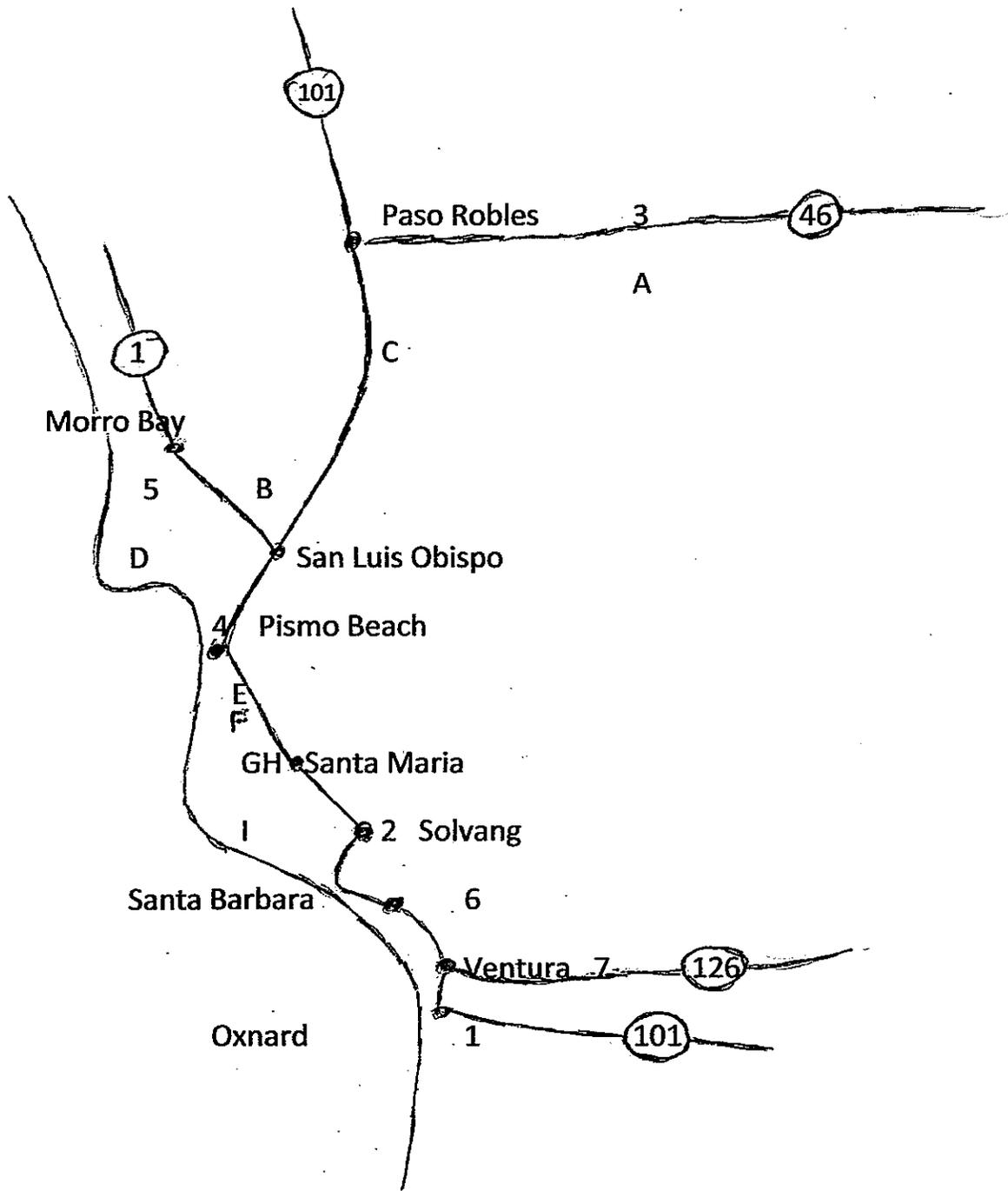
DAY 5 The Morro Bay Golf Club has a sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean, the rock and village. The club has been around for quite a while. We have played her numerous times and still do not seem to believe that all greens slope to the corner of the bay, it is more than an illusion, it's a fact, and we just can't seem to accept that reality. Three days of golf is sufficient for most of the group. One of the members of our group is a top drawer R.V. camper and hosts an amazing barbecue dinner at their camp site the last night. Of course all the ladies have anteed up to prepare the food and the expert chefs among us are offering all manner of suggestions, and insults as to the proper barbecuing technique. You wonder what passes through our minds', sitting around the blazing campfire with that thousand yard stare into the flames, surrounded by good friends, how great is that?



DAY 6 Most everyone heads home after breakfast. We on the other hand have a little more golfing in store. Rancho San Marcos is an attractive, upscale, relatively expensive course tucked in the mountains behind Santa Barbara. On occasion we will ante up the bucks to play these once in a lifetime courses. We backtracked to Solvang to make good on our missed earlier reservation. Generally speaking partaking of the grape is not our drink of choice, but when the occasion suggests otherwise it will be pinot noir as it doesn't seem to grab the jaw muscle like the other tart varieties seem to. I mention this because our favorite winery more than doubled their price since the movie and we were able to find a nice store in Solvang where we can stock up with a few cases and not get gouged.

DAY 7 Elkins Ranch in Fillmore was another pleasant surprise, tucked into the foothills. The guys we were paired up with made for fascinating conversation as they actually work in the film/television industry doing sound and editing as we can understand. There was a lot of name dropping, not in the bragging sense, but more as colleagues. Goldie Hawn and Curt Russell were mentioned as great people to work with. Parents who get up at O dark thirty to get their favorite goalie to his weekend hockey games are a special breed. So knowing from experience with our own son, we are of the opinion that those two are stars as parents as well.

Hunter Ranch, Dairy Creek, Chalk Mountain, Cypress Ridge, and Black Lake are other courses we didn't play this time, but that get rotated into our itinerary. San Luis Obispo has a county card that non-residents can acquire and save a bundle on green fees if playing there often enough would make it feasible. In addition to the wineries a visit to Hearst Castle, the elephant seal beach, Cayucos, Cambria, local museums', and county fair in Paso Robles are all worthwhile to experience.



- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| 1 Seabee | A Hunter Ranch |
| 2 Alisal | B Dairy Creek |
| 3 Links Vista Del Hombre | C Chalk Mountain |
| 4 Avila Beach | D Sea Pines |
| 5 Morro Bay | E Cypress Ridge |
| 6 Rancho San Marcos | F Black Lake |
| 7 Elkins Ranch | G Santa Maria |
| | H Monarch Dunes |
| | I La Purisma |