

Sacramento

March 2014



Bob and Molly Hillery

We have, of course, visited Sacramento many times and always find it a pleasant city in which to spend some time. It has a good deal of history associated with the California Gold Rush. It was the main provisioning town for those heading in search of fortune in the hills to the east and the point from which those riches were shipped to the coast and beyond. Old Sacramento (a four by three block area on the banks of the Sacramento River) captures the flavor of the Forty-niners era with its wooden sidewalks and nicely restored old buildings. Sacramento is now of course the capital of the State and has a beautiful Capitol building and surrounding park area in a generally vibrant downtown. The city also has a comprehensive bike and walking trail network, particularly in the Natomas area in which we stay.

The main attraction for us, however, is now five years old and it is she, Samantha, and her parents, Christopher and Cyndi, that bring us west just as often as we can. Living over 2000 miles apart, we feel very fortunate to be able to see our family as frequently as we do – generally at least four times a year in one location or another.

Thus, our long weekends in Sacramento are spent with Christopher, Cyndi and Samantha as much as possible and don't really need supplementing with sightseeing or other "vacation" activities. But, thanks to the organizing skills of our daughter-in-law, these trips often do include something a little extra – and this one was no exception.

Sacramento, March 2013

Wednesday March 19

We left home a little after 7pm for what has become our routine before an early morning flight: dinner at Morton's in Cincinnati (excellent) and then a night at the airport Marriott.

Thursday March 20

We were up soon after 7 and caught the 7:45 shuttle to the airport after checking out of the Marriott. We had plenty of time for a coffee after clearing security before our flight to Los Angeles at 9:15. The flight left on time and was a smooth, clear ride for the most part until we got past Denver. From there we flew too far south to see much of the Rockies but it also got more hazy – so a little nap took over from the sightseeing!



We arrived in LA a little early which meant that we had over 1 ½ hours in the Delta Lounge before our short flight up to Sacramento. This too arrived early so we were at our hotel – having stopped for a coffee on the way – by 4pm.

Tonight we met Christopher, Cyndi and Sammy at “On the Border”, a Mexican favorite of Sammy's. We ate early (6pm) which suited us fine as it meant that we got to bed at a reasonable hour even in the Eastern time zone that we had left this morning.

The Pacific Ocean north of Los Angeles

Friday March 21

We both had a good night's sleep and it was after 8am before we were up and about. We walked to Starbucks for breakfast and then walked back “the long way round” for a total distance of 1 ¼ miles. By now (after nine) it was already warm enough for short sleeves and so I started my longer walk in a tee shirt and light trousers.

Molly stayed in the hotel and did some knitting and reading while I walked west to El Centro Avenue, north to San Juan and then back via a riverside path and a pedestrian bridge over the expressway to the hotel.

A taste of Spring on my walk



Molly and I then went for another walk to Starbucks where we had coffee and a cookie sitting outside in

the shade with temperatures now in the mid-seventies. By the time we got back to the hotel, Molly had walked a total of about two miles, and I had covered almost eight, for the day.



A little after 3pm we left the hotel and drove to watch Sammy in her 3:30 gymnastics class. She had taken gymnastics when she was quite a bit younger but karate seemed to have taken over. However, gymnastics were re-started this school year and it was fun to watch her practice with her class mates. As usual when we are present at one of her classes, she was very camera-conscious and therefore probably didn't perform as well or as rigorously (but with much stage presence) as she might during a normal session.

Sammy on the Balance Beam

We left Planet Gymnastics for a very pleasant (Cyndi and Christopher) birthday dinner at the Melting Pot in downtown Sacramento and, as usual, Sammy entertained herself very well throughout the entire two hours.

Saturday March 22

Molly and I once again took a walk to Starbucks for coffee and I took a slightly longer walk afterwards before we drove to Christopher and Cyndi's home to pick them up for our drive to the San Francisco Flower and Garden Show. We left at 9:45 and with the distances and traffic prevalent in the Bay Area, a stop for lunch (where we met Bill and Shirl) it was almost 2pm by the time we got to the event – which, somewhat confusingly, was held in San Mateo rather than San Francisco. This had the mixed blessing of being a slightly greater driving distance but avoided driving in the downtown area of San Francisco.

It was another beautiful day and the temperature was again about 75F by the time we started our four hours at the show. There were two large buildings filled with exhibits, several lectures that were available throughout the afternoon and an area devoted to gardens decked out in their entirety. These latter were not as spectacular nor as beautiful as I had imagined they would be and seemed to emphasize more stone and gravel than soil and flowers – although in view of the prolonged drought in this area, perhaps that tendency was appropriate.





There were, however, several very picturesque water features (which reminded me of our former home but which did not make me nostalgic to return when I recalled the work involved) and some spectacular exhibits of orchids and other blossoms as well as a very comprehensive bonsai tree exhibit and demonstration area. Finally, there was a Children's area where Sammy spent the last hour with a tireless group of volunteers who showed endless patience as dozens of young kids attempted crafts and asked questions on the various child-friendly (and uniquely appealing, as in the worm "farm") and five-year- old eye level exhibits).

So, it was 6pm when we started the return journey (Bill and Shirl had already left) but this seemed to be a lot quicker than the morning commute. We stopped at a small Italian restaurant in Dixon (about 20 miles from Sacramento) for our evening meal and then drove on to home and the hotel. After a long and somewhat leg-tiring day we turned in about 10pm – by far the latest of our bedtimes since arriving in Sacramento.

Sunday March 23

Once again we walked to Starbucks for a very light breakfast (just coffee for Molly) and then I had time for a short walk before we met our family for an 11:30 brunch at Mimi's.

We spent the afternoon taking a short bike ride (Sammy and Granddad), watching videos and photographs of Sammy's graduation to Blue Belt Karate, French Day at her school and a recent visit to Disneyland. We also exchanged several gifts; with visits of perhaps four times a year there is always, it seems, at least one birthday and/or Public Holiday (that has taken place immediately before the trip or will before we meet again) to celebrate. This time it was Cyndi's and



Christopher's birthdays but, as is their custom, Cyndi and Christopher also chose to give us an Easter gift. Sammy was not left out as she received three Peter Rabbit books from our New Year visit to England as well as the recently published "Mrs Dog goes to India and Nepal" (with Grandma and Granddad). Molly and I also received a very unusual World Map as an early Easter gift.

After a short separation to allow us to clean up before dinner, we all met again at Tuk Tuk, a favorite Thai restaurant for our final meal together for this trip, which was followed by a visit to the local ice cream store for dessert. We then said our farewells and looked forward to seeing each other again in Anchorage at the start of our family Alaskan cruise in July.



Monday March 24

I had time for a short walk before we completed packing and check-out and then drove to IHOP for breakfast. We were at the airport by 11 in plenty of time for our 12:30 flight to Salt lake City. This flight was on time as was our onward flight to Cincinnati so we were home before 11:30 after another enjoyable weekend with our family in California.

