

# *Oregon Coast*

*Thursday, April 9, 2009.*

You have to be there 90 minutes in advance, for the 90 minute Coho crossing to Port Angeles, leaving Victoria at 10:30am. The front lounge of the ferry is warm and comfortable. Jim asks me where I think north is, once we're outside the harbor. I point north, behind us at 4 o'clock. He's got out his blackberry. How did you know that!? Why isn't Port Angeles to the west? he says. My brilliant husband, who usually knows where north is in an underground garage...?! Maybe we need to go to Hawaii next year? To learn west.

We got to **Tacoma** around 3:30pm, and went straight to the cone shaped Glass Museum. Great, except that we used to see all that in Victoria, at Starfish Gallery, for free! The glass bridge was a surprise (I was kicking myself for forgetting the camera in the car) and the walk on the waterfront very nice, if rushed – but we managed to get to Portland by dark.

Jim IM'd Leah from a **Portland** coffee shop on Friday morning. I'd just finished stepping on the table base and splashing both drinks, so it cheered me up immensely to giggle at her usual lack of knowledge (and interest) in west coast geography. Portland is great – free public transportation in the downtown area, city repair project (famous for turning city squares into circles), tons of artists. We went to **Lawrence Gallery** in the **Pearl District** - Brent Lawrence does work in finely cut and painted steel in subtle colours and images, absolutely beautiful! Also Jeff White landscapes, very soft, huge, with vibrant colours. Very different artists, both excellent.

**The Museum of Contemporary Crafts** down the road had magnificent jewelry – crafted by about a dozen artists, each artist, each piece, equally stunning, if that's possible.

We bumped into a guy with arthrogryposis at lunch (what are the chances?) He was in a wheelchair, had had 9 operations, and said he'd reacted badly as a child to being disabled. He's in his 30's, single, a musician. Nice guy – Jim paid for his meal & they traded cards.

We went to the **International Rose Garden** which will be gorgeous when the roses bloom one of these months! It's up on a hill, near other gardens. **Hoyt Arboretum** is huge, 12 miles of trails, so Jim sat that one out, sat in the sun in the car listening to *Breakpoint*, a techie spy novel on CD that I'd brought from the library for him. The arboretum borders the **Vietnam war memorial**, which is one of the best I've seen - a spiral garden that gradually tells the sad story on black marble as you go around, year by year. We went together to the **Pittock Mansion**, with the great gift shop and best view in town.

So that was about it for today, except for **Nob Hill**, on 23rd Ave, full of very cool stores similar to Monkey and Rat in the Pearl District, stuff from the Himalayas, Turkey, neat pottery, live music, restaurants. Jim listened to the CD again and was the soul of patience while I shopped, or at least licked windows, as they say in France. So far, I've just looked, aside from a \$7 piece of tea tree soap at Lush

and a 68 cent cup at a thrift store. Our room has a fridge and a microwave (hence the cup). Neither one of us has any stomach for expensive vacations.

### *Saturday, April 11.*

We left Portland at 9am, went south to Salem, across on hwy 22, and got to **Lincoln City** on the coast a little after noon, after a couple of short stops. Great scenery – especially just south of **Depoe bay**, where a lichen covered arbor of trees span the road and rock formations sculpt the beach; Beverley beach, Moolack beach... all the beaches are beautiful.

**Yaquina Bay State Park & Lighthouse** maintained with the original 1870's furniture, overlooking a huge, wide beach and a sort of art deco cement-pillared green bridge. There's a glass blowing place at the south end of the bridge that looks more interesting than the heavily advertised one in Lincoln City.

The sun breaks out every now and then. It's 55F, so... about 12 degrees, on this April weekend when our anniversary (34<sup>th</sup>) happens to fall on Easter Sunday. Aside from the lightness of the traffic in Portland on Friday, everything is business as usual, which is nice for us!

We started the journey listening to Sylvia Plath's *Bell Jar*, until it got too depressing. *Breakpoint* is purely for Jim, when I'm out walking or writing this blog. The 3<sup>rd</sup> book on CD is *Eat Pray Love*, a jolting departure from *Breakpoint*, but he managed to get into it, even without any introductory whale music.

**Waldport** – another beautiful beach! Pounding surf, sand shining wet. Oregon passed a "beach bill" in the 60's that made the whole coast public. The tourist trade along the roadsides going through small towns is Look Ma colourful and tending to trinkets. Yachats, near the Seal Caves, seems a little nicer. Jim figures they screwed up spelling yachts and came up with Yachats, Gem of the Oregon Coast. The road is also magnificent along here, near **Cape Perpetua / Devil's Churn** scenic area.

With the twists and turns of the coast, the GPS occasionally goes nuts... "Off route!! Back on route! Off route!! Back on route! Off route!!..." until I press "VOICE OFF". *Whew!!*

The **Sea Lions Caves** is a bit of a tourist trap at \$11, with an elevator down, info panels, video and the sea lions only seen through a wire screen. There was an unearthly keening multiplied by a hundred lions. They could also be seen by an outdoor lookout, high on the cliff. I took plenty of photos and a movie to capture the sound.

The beaches are creamy sand with dunes, and the roads cut out from packed earth that ranges from cream through mustard, burnt sienna, rust, to slate gray and back again. The foliage is also packed thick spruce, birch, alders just budding, with trees on the shore slanted, as if they'd gotten cool, angled haircuts.

We took some shots from **Cape Meares Lookout**, of a beach surrounded on both sides by the sea, on a detour from hwy 101. I walked along the beach at the camping park just down the road, at 6pm. The beach was wide, unbroken perfect sand for miles, not cold, but windy and dramatically cloudy. People

walked in the distance in pairs or small groups, like a lightly populated dreamscape. The wind threatened to create a sandstorm for a few seconds, then died. The rollers thundered in.

We missed the Tillamook Cheese Factory, which closed at 6, and a lot of interesting shops, but we were bound for supper at the Lumberyard Grill in Cannon Beach, or so we thought. I backed out of that one; **Cannon Beach** looked like it was created for people on expense accounts. We went on to **Seaside**, ate pasta at Pizza Hut and slept at the clean, warm **Coast River Inn**.

### *Sunday, April 12*

Woke to howling wind and rain on Easter Sunday / our anniversary. I figured that since checkout was 11am, I'd have time to walk along the promenade and change into dry clothes afterwards. After a 100%-sure-on-both-sides difference of opinion about which way the beach was, settled by Google Earth (I was dead on again – hard to believe), I set off, intending to be gone an hour.

The **Seaside** promenade was deserted but the beach was not. People seemed to be gathering something in cans, their green and blue rain capes blowing sideways in the wind, their legs lost in a mirage of sand as they disappeared beyond the dunes. **The Prom** is bordered by a low arched white fence, home to pure white gulls with that brilliant red freckle on their beaks, others huddled on the street, calling to each other in staccato, like a higher pitched version of the Inuit breathing song. Beyond the bright green tufts of grass in the dunes studded was a deserted metal swing set, then the long cream beach set against the blue gray rollers, their white tops flying off, merging into the mist, far off at sea. The coast is never more beautiful than this. I felt like the luckiest person in the world, if not the smartest. If I'd been REALLY smart, I'd have brought rain pants! My jeans were plastered against my legs, dripping into my socks. I called off the walk after 25 minutes.

One complete change of clothes later, we set out for Washington State, keeping to the coast. Moss, lichen, marshes, bright yellow skunk cabbage, white tree groves, dunes, rivers, all are ecstatic in the rain & lovely in the mist. Jim's driving and I'm typing this, looking out the window and tabbing back to Streets & Trips to zoom in or out on the map when we need it, or whenever it talks to me. It's been a lifesaver, getting us out of cities and to precise addresses that I've entered from the guidebooks.

I wonder what we'll do for our 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year? Our 25<sup>th</sup> was celebrated in Montreal, staying at a B&B with photos of Leonard Cohen, who our hostess had befriended at some point. It was cold and wet and Jim started snoring, so in the middle of the night I took my pillow and some bedclothes and slept quite well, on the floor in a TV room. We all kibbutzed at the kitchen table until 11am, no one wanting to go out. If we were REALLY smart we would have gotten married on July 1<sup>st</sup>, like Jim's parents! They spent their 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the cottage, with all 5 kids and a slew of grandkids, in 1977, when Jim and I were between Jamie's and Leah's present age and Tom and Deda so incredibly old, at 59 and 56. We'll both be 56 at our 35<sup>th</sup>, next year.

There are a lot of clear cuts right along the road in Oregon and especially Washington, with no effort to hide the ugliness for some reason. The present one has a big sign: Weyerhaeuser, Committed to Sustainable Forestry. They own the pulp mill is **Cosmopolis**, where the hair salon is called Cosi Cuts. Too

bad it isn't owned by a lady named Claire. **Hoquiam** is a little larger but not more prosperous, with the typical treeless main street. Western humour crops up intermittently all during the trip – here it's a sign for "Antiques and Clutter"; another one was "Tired and ugly? Want to just be ugly?" Stuff you wouldn't get away with in central Canada. I love it.

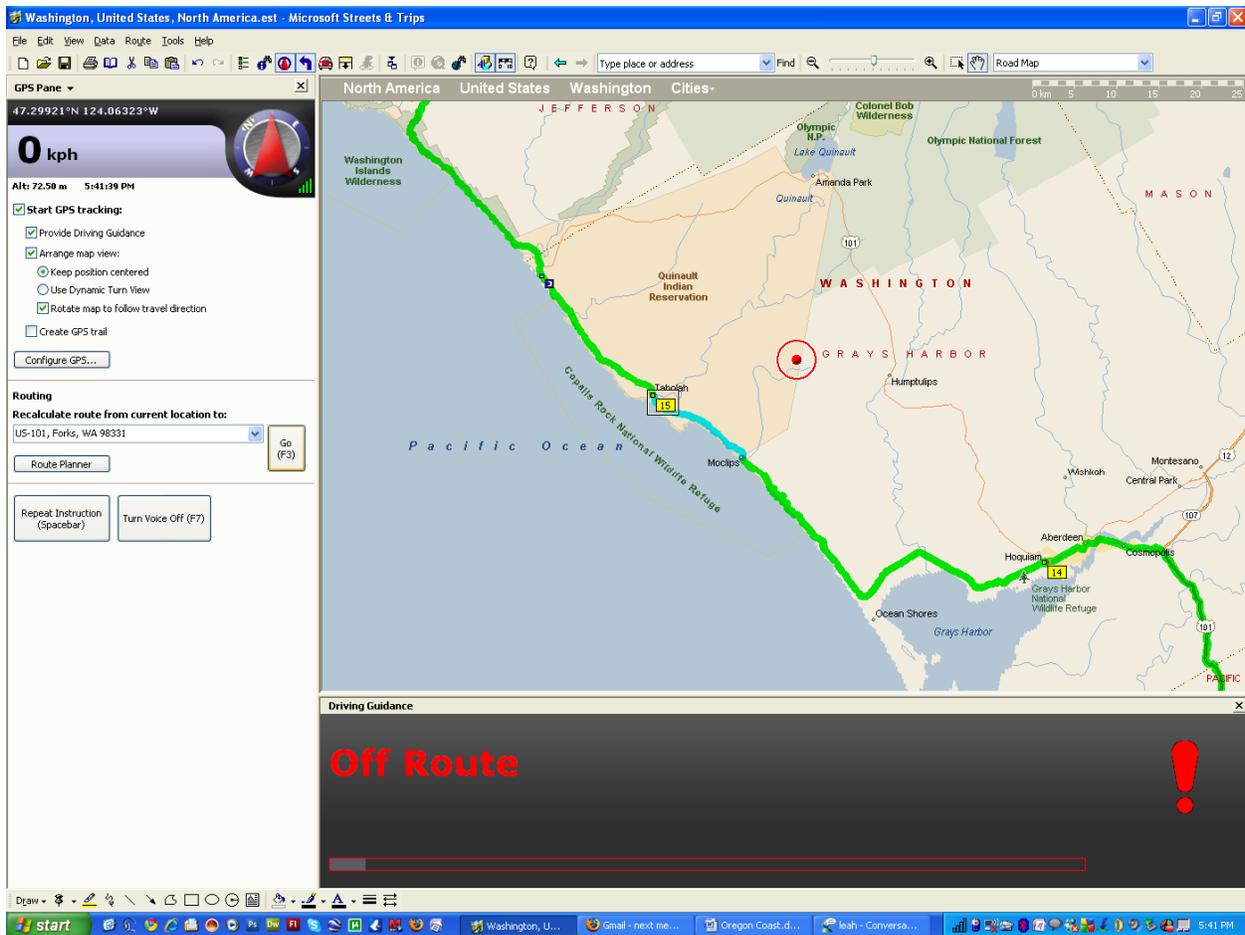
We're on hwy 109 along the coast, heading toward the Quinault Indian Reservation. The gas gauge has 3 bars left, at 515km. We've gone about 1000 km so far. The Yaris loves highways. We're getting 5.9 litres per 100 km.

Boarded up Copalis definitely looked like it was having a hard time coping. Then, out of the poverty-stricken blue, we rounded a corner, and there was **Seabrook!** A small town, built in 2004, full of tall, varanda-ed, lovely clapboard beach homes. Intrigued, Jim pulled a u-turn and drove in. Where do these people work? We stopped at the town's café to find that it was a family owned area developed as vacation rentals. The waitress discovered it's our anniversary and offered us the chocolate brownie ice cream and fudge dessert, for free. And the rain stopped!

A few minutes later, at **Pacific Beach**, we went down to the shore and drove along the beach a bit, getting out and shooting photos. By the time we got to the reserve it must have been about 4:30pm. At the Taholah river, in the middle of the Quinault Reserve, the pavement ended. A dirt road quickly turned to pot holes, then a narrow road, then a laneway, and then several kilometers later... nothing. End of the road. The computer told us that the highway was just beyond, but obviously that wasn't going to help us, unless we got out and walked! At 5:09 we turned around and headed back, 50.9 km after our fill-up at Hoquiam, where the 101 had split from the 109. I kept asking Jim, whose theory is that you need momentum to get through tough places, to slow down, thinking, what happens if we have a flat here??

But we didn't. And we didn't have to go all the way back to Hoquiam either. A Native man that we passed told us to take a route that's not on our map, **Moclips Olympic Highway**, back to the 101. A brand new highway through masses of white alder and cedar that arbored overhead, it was quite beautiful and we were massively grateful not to have to return all the way to Hoquiam. By 6pm we were back on the 101. And by 7pm we were at the **Kalaloch Lodge**, for supper.

The Lodge is beautiful, cedar, right on the sea, with Tom Thomson trees beyond the lagoon that's off the balcony. Supper was also beautiful; the waitress took our photo on finding out it's our anniversary... and then appeared with hot marionberry crumble topped with strawberries and ice cream!! Again on the house. My goodness. My mother was right about Americans. They ARE generous. We were so stuffed, we rolled out the door.



The little road that wasn't. The red dot is us.

*Monday, April 13*

**Hoh Humm Ranch**, 171763 highway 101 just below Forks, is a 200 acre ranch with cows, chicken, llama. The owners charge \$40 or less per night, which includes a large breakfast and good conversation. We watched TV with them (PBS) in the evening and slept well in spite of the staccato rain on the roof competing with hundreds of frogs, which was actually quite lovely. The woofers joined us for breakfast. Eight children were raised in that house. The owners were married at 21, like us, but will be celebrating their 56<sup>th</sup> anniversary!

The Visitor Centre in **Forks** has free coffee & internet as well as information. Hurricane Ridge is closed. We can see the snow line as we drive along, and it's snowing up there. LaPush and Neah Bay are out of the way, so we decided to go to **Lake Crescent**, which is hugged by the highway on the way to Port Angeles. Good choice! It's one of the most scenic parts of the 101, with snow covered peaks, moss covered trees, and right in the Olympic National Park. Storm King Ranger Station has marked trails, one of which goes to the 90 ft. **Marymere Falls**. Parts of the trail, which is stunning in itself, go over the river on bridges of a single log with handrails. Stairs climb halfway up the Falls. Highly recommended!

Lake Crescent is just 20 miles from Port Angeles, so we were plenty early, or so we thought, since we believed the ferry was leaving at 4pm and we'd have to be there at 3pm. Jim (who as usual is intuition itself) stopped by the ferry terminal at 12:53pm "just to check" on what time we'd need to be there, although we'd already been told one hour in advance, for the return trip. "We're loading at 1:30" the guy says. "*For the 4pm ferry???*" (that was me). "The last ferry leaves Port Angeles at 2pm; it leaves Victoria at 4pm." Oh.

And the last treat of this great trip was meeting Dorothy on the ferry! Lovely!!