

WILDSAM

CALIFORNIA

FIELD GUIDES



AMERICAN ROAD TRIP SERIES

VOL. 5

FEATURING

RON HOWARD	director
DOLORES HUERTA	civil rights activist
SOLEIL HO	restaurant critic
ERIN LEE GAFILL	painter
GREGG BOYDSTON	firefighter
BESS KALB	comedian
LOUIE PÉREZ	guitarist, songwriter
LESLIE BERLIN	historian
EARLONNE WOODS	podcaster
DANIEL DUANE	writer
THAO NGUYEN	musician
PATRISSE CULLORS	artist
SACHI CUNNINGHAM	documentary filmmaker
GUSTAVO ARELLANO	food writer
GENERAL JEFF	community activist
CHARLES GAINES	artist, professor

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WELCOME

ON OUR LAST TRIP to Big Sur, when we parked at the Ernst Ewoldsen Nature Center, the feeling in the air was peculiar. The river burred nearby, summer birds talked in the trees, the thick sagey dampness cooled us as we funneled toward the trailhead. All that was pretty normal. Big Sur has a way of being casual in its glory. No, this was an uneasy serenity, equal doses of giddiness and dislocation as we switchbacked through the redwoods.

We were walking [the only way in] to a different Big Sur: “the Island,” as residents called it. It was August 2017, after two monstrous landslides along Highway 1. The first took out Pfeiffer Canyon Bridge, half a mile down from where we stood. The second big slide was at Mud Creek, about 35 miles south. Other than a few construction trucks and the occasional helicopter drop at Post Ranch Inn, the place felt deserted, the infamous car traffic gone.

Hundreds of years ago, explorers on ships from Spain and other places actually thought all of California was an island. Maps from the 1500s show it either set apart, floating out in the Pacific, or sometimes half-drawn, a mysterious phantom of a place. Rebecca Solnit, in her book *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, describes one such map, where “the west coast begins to dissolve where California starts ... as though the world there was not yet made.”

Fantasy has defined California’s essence ever since. Even when the first grizzled settlers found no riches in them hills, the first ingénue failed to grace the silver screen or the first coders left Menlo Park without owning a single foosball table. Even in disappointment, California offers itself as an archipelago. Yosemite for Muir. City Lights Books for so many. Laurel Canyon. Salvation Mountain. Even Disneyland, an island of childhood.

Henry Miller lived in Big Sur for almost 20 years. He called it the place that taught him to say amen. That summer day in 2017, as we hiked up to empty Highway 1, found our way to Nepenthe and settled onto the sundeck for Ambrosia burgers, we felt the same. Alone, alive, lost and found. —The Editors

HISTORY

- 1400s... Diverse native tribes flourish
- 1542 First Spanish tall ships anchor in San Diego Bay
- 1804..... Spain governs Alta California province, followed by Mexico
- 1823..... In Sonoma, final of 21 Franciscan missions built
- 1881 Prospectors find silver in Calico, start 15-year boom
- 1892 First meeting of Sierra Club alpinists, Muir presides
- 1907..... Santa Cruz boardwalk and park opens
- 1924..... Last sighting of a California grizzly bear, in Sequoia NP
- 1932..... Pilot spots giant, mysterious geoglyph figures near Blythe
- 1937..... Big Sur stretch of U.S. 1 completed by San Quentin prisoners
- 1940..... Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* wins Pulitzer Prize
- 1946..... *The Hollywood Reporter* column starts blacklisting movement
- 1947 Chuck Yeager breaks sound barrier over Mojave
- 1948..... In-N-Out Burger opens in Baldwin Park
- 1949..... Hollywood coffee shop [Googies] inspires futuristic trends
- 1955..... Disneyland opens in Anaheim
- 1956 Eames' lounge chair and ottoman created in Venice Beach
- 1958 Wham-O sells 25 million Hula-Hoops in four months
- 1965 Psychedelic quintet plays as Grateful Dead at Ken Kesey home
 - Riots erupt in Watts neighborhood in Los Angeles
- 1968 Robert Kennedy shot, killed at LA's Ambassador Hotel
- 1969 100,000 barrels of oil spill into Santa Barbara Channel
- 1978 Harvey Milk, first openly gay elected official, assassinated
- 1982 *E.T.* becomes top-grossing film of all time [till '93 *Jurassic Park*]
- 1984..... Carl Lewis wins four gold medals in Summer Olympics
- 1989 Earthquake delays World Series game in Bay Area
- 1992 Johnny Carson's 4,531st and final *Tonight Show* episode
- 1997 Steve Jobs returns [after being fired in 1985] to Apple
- 2000 Screaming Eagle's '92 Cab Sauv sells at charity auction for \$500,000
 - Dot-com bubble bursts
- 2007..... Thomas Keller's The French Laundry given three Michelin stars
- 2014..... World's largest solar power station opens in Mojave Desert
- 2018 Ranch Fire, near Ukiah, is largest in state's history

LODGING

BAY VIEWS

Nick's Cove

Marshall

nickscove.com

Stilted cottages on misty Tomales Bay, plus a long dock made for oyster devouring.

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VICTORIAN B&B

Joshua Grindle Inn

Mendocino

joshuagrindlemen

docino.com

Charming water tower conversion, one of a few that recall Mendo's heyday.

.....

FIRE TOWER

Calpine Lookout

Tahoe National Forest

recreation.gov

Decommissioned observation tower. No water or electricity; views for days.

.....

BEACHY '50s

The Surfrider Malibu

Malibu

thesurfridermalibu.com

Classic midcentury motel, boutiqueified for maximum surf-adjacent relaxation.

CLIFFTOP ESCAPE

Post Ranch Inn

Big Sur

postranchinn.com

Bucket list-worthy suites, treehouses perched 1,200 cliffside feet above the Pacific.

.....

AIRSTREAMS

AutoCamp

Guerneville

autocamp.com

Glamp among Russian River redwoods; a Yosemite outpost as well.

.....

NAPA RESORT

Calistoga

Motor Lodge

calistogamotorlodge

andspa.com

Chic reinvention of the roadside classic, mineral pools aplenty.

.....

RUSTIC RANCH

Drakesbad Guest Ranch

Chester

lassenlodging.com

Secluded lodge at southeast end of Lassen Volcanic National Park.

WELLNESS ENCLAVE

Ojai Valley Inn

Ojai

ojaivalleyinn.com

Sprawling mission-style resort and spa tucked in Topatopa range.

.....

RETRO GLAMOUR

Sunset Tower

Los Angeles

sunsettowerhotel.com

Hollywood deals happen at The Tower Bar, where the maître d' is former *Vogue* editor Gabe Doppelt.

.....

BEACHSIDE BEAUTE

Hotel Joaquin

Laguna Beach

hoteljoaquin.com

22 rooms tucked into Shaw's Cove; lounge with your nightcap in the "Living Room."

.....

MIDCENTURY MODERN

Parker Palm Springs

parkerpalmsprings.com

Gene Autry's baseball team training facility; now colorful Jonathan Adler-decorated retreat.

GOLDEN STATE

EST. 1850 MOTTO: *Eureka*



STATE BIRD

CALIFORNIA QUAIL



STATE FLOWER

CALIFORNIA POPPY



STATE GEM

BENITOITE



STATE SONG

"I LOVE YOU, CALIFORNIA"

THE BEAR FLAG



CULTURAL LANDMARKS

Disneyland
Anaheim

Golden Gate Bridge
San Francisco

Salvation Mountain
Calipatria

Griffith Observatory
Los Angeles

Hearst Castle
San Simeon

Santa Monica Pier
Santa Monica

SOUTH COAST



HIKING TRAIL

RAZOR POINT
TORREY PINES STATE RESERVE



FARM STAND

FARMERS MARKETS
SANTA MONICA



CINEMA

FOX BRUIN THEATER
WESTWOOD VILLAGE

SMALL FESTIVAL

Sage & Songbirds Festival
Alpine
chirp.org

CLASSIC RESTAURANT

Neptune's Net
Malibu
neptunesnet.com

LIVE MUSIC

Troubadour
West Hollywood
troubadour.com

SCENIC DRIVE

Pacific Coast Highway
Long Beach to San Diego

SWIMMING HOLE

Cooper Canyon Falls
Pearblossom
San Gabriel Mountains

MEMENTO

Sidewinder robe
blockshoptextiles.com

OJAI

POPULATION 7,582

SIZE 4.36 SQ MILES

ELEVATION 745 FT

SUNSHINE 269 DAYS

COFFEE:

*Beacon, Ojai Coffee Roasters,
Coffee Connection*

BEST DAY OF THE YEAR:

Lavender blooms on the last Saturday in June

With its hot springs and rumored energy vortex, Ojai has long drawn artists, spiritual gurus and Angelenos seeking respite. Take your morning coffee on a wander through book nerd heaven: **BART'S BOOKS** is the biggest outdoor bookstore in the country. Other favorite shops include **FIG CURATED LIVING**, a tucked-away trove of handcrafted goods, and Summer Camp, a 1950s gas station now offering everything from vintage kilim rugs to cheery pennants to custom framing. For lunch, try the crispy fried-chicken sandwich at outdoor eatery **THE NEST**. Drive into the Topatopa foothills for a taste of the valley's agricultural history at **OJAI OLIVE OIL** and a hike; Shelf Road is a relaxed trail through tangerine orchards with sweeping valley views. You'll work up an appetite, and luckily, almost everywhere in town offers farm-to-table dining, including longtime barbecue joint **OJAI DEER LODGE**. Locals are rooting for newcomer Ojai Rotie, which serves up Lebanese rotisserie platters and fresh bread. Bed down at the Ojai Rancho Inn, a cozy revamped motor lodge, but not before checking out what's going down at its tiny wood-paneled bar, **CHIEF'S PEAK**, where locals and travelers mingle over beer and wine, a crackling fire warms the cooler nights and the pool is open to guests and non-guests alike.

LOCAL TO KNOW

"I first came here to get away from humans. We have that law where you can't build anything higher than two stories and there's no chains, no highway running through. People tell me that they feel like they're in the middle of nowhere, but they're literally 12 miles from Ventura."

— MARIE PIERRE AGOSTINI, Ojai Valley Trail Riding Company

MENDOCINO

POPULATION **894**

SIZE **7.4 SQ MILES**

ELEVATION **154 FT**

SUNSHINE **189 DAYS**

COFFEE:

GoodLife Café

BEST DAY OF THE YEAR:

Third Saturday in March; spot gray whales from Point Cabrillo

One summer night in 1850, an opium-toting clipper ship slammed into a reef 170 miles north of San Francisco. An expedition was dispatched to salvage the remains, but upon arrival they discovered something far more valuable: miles and miles of towering redwoods. A mill was built in what's now Mendocino, and timbermen came from as far as Maine, hence Main Street's saltbox cottages. Eventually, the timber economy faded, which in turn lured artists like Bill Zacha, who founded the **MENDOCINO ART CENTER** in the late 1950s. A bohemian counterculture took hold, and 60 years later, the center is a thriving presence. The number of communes has dwindled, but the vibe lives on in artist-owned utopias like **SALMON CREEK FARM**, which hosts workshops and occasionally rents out its perfect cabin [Cedar #7]. Twenty-five minutes south of town, the century-old **HARBOR HOUSE INN** draws destination diners to its James Beard-nominated restaurant. The ever-changing menu might include kelp-roasted abalone, wrested off the rocks below. For a watering hole, choose your adventure: dive glory at **DICK'S PLACE** or Mendocino Hotel's lobby bar, which hits a classic [but haunted!] note. Otherwise, pensive walks at **BOWLING BALL BEACH**, where boulders dot the sand at low tide, are the Mendo way. Along the wild crags of Point Arena-Stornetta Public Lands, where whales spout in the distance, a gorgeous 1,665-acre swath was made a national monument in 2014.

LOCAL TO KNOW

"Mendocino locals are a breed apart, and even visitors get into the mindset. So we're really lucky—anytime I see a book that makes me go, 'That's weird,' I know I'll have a buyer for it. We get a lot of compliments on our science section: The most oddball, obscure topics sell."

— CHRISTIE OLSON DAY, Gallery Bookshop

"GOLD! GOLD!"

Just when we had got partly to work, here came Mr. Marshall with his old wool hat in hand, and stopped within six or eight yards of the saw pit, and exclaimed, "Boys, I have got her now." I jumped from the pit and stepped to him, and on looking in his hat discovered say ten or twelve pieces of small scales of what proved to be gold. I picked up the largest piece, worth about fifty cents, and tested it with my teeth, and as it did not give, I held it aloft and exclaimed, "gold, boys, gold! ... I stepped to the workbench and put it to the second with the hammer. While doing that it occurred to me that while in the Mormon Battalion in Mexico, we came to some timber called manzanita. Our guides and interpreters said that wood was what the Mexicans smelted their gold and silver ores with. It is a hard wood and makes a very hot fire and also lasts a long time. Remembering that we had left a very hot bed of these coals in the fireplace of the cabin, I hurried off and made the third test by placing it upon the point of an old shovel blade, and then inserted it in among the coals ... although it was plated almost as thin as a sheet of notepaper, the heat did not change its appearance in the least. I arose from this third test confident that it was gold. Then running out to the party who were grouped together, made the second proclamation, saying, "gold! Gold!"—*James S. Brown's account of the discovery at Sutter's Mill, January 24, 1848*

GARAGES OF SILICON VALLEY

HEWLETT-PACKARD

367 Addison Ave
Palo Alto

HP began here in 1939 when Dave Packard lived in the first-floor apartment and Bill Hewlett occupied a shed in the back. The co-founders had become friends on a 1934 camping trip.

APPLE

2066 Crist Dr
Los Altos

Steve Jobs was living at his parents' unassuming ranch-style home in the mid-1970s when he and Steve Wozniak built the first Apple computers in their garage.

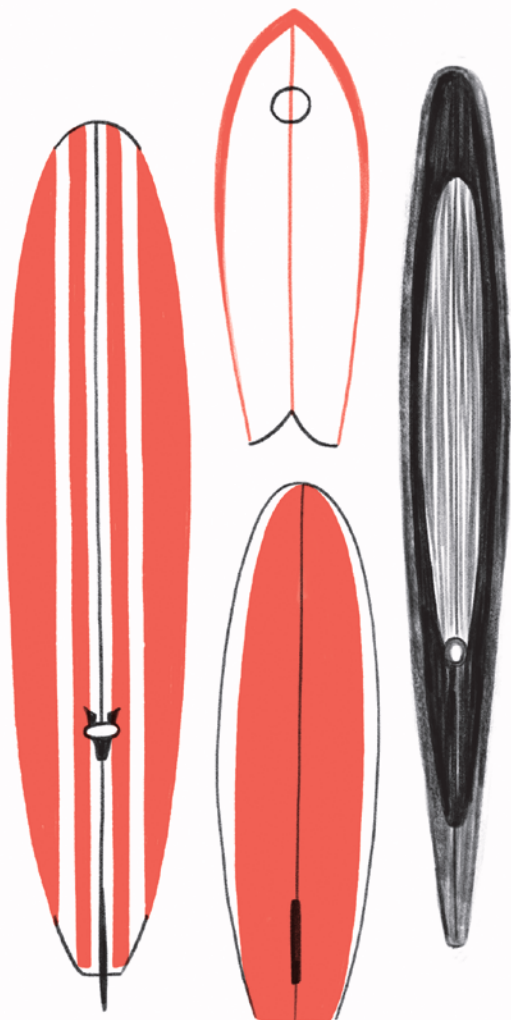
GOOGLE

232 Santa Margarita Ave
Menlo Park

Larry Page and Sergey Brin were Stanford Ph.D., students when Susan Wojcicki [YouTube CEO] rented her garage to them in 1998. Google's first seven worked here.

SURFBOARD SHAPERS OF NOTE

SHAPER	DESCRIPTION
David Kawānanakoa 1880s	<i>The teenage Hawaiian nobleman carved Santa Cruz redwood into the mainland's first boards.</i>
George Freeth 1900s-1910s	<i>Heroic, Hawai'i-born Redondo Beach lifeguard. Jack London called him "brown Mercury."</i>
Tom Blake 1920s	<i>The founder of California surf culture, hollowed-out vintage Hawaiian designs.</i>
Meyers Butte 1930s	<i>His family-run LA building firm produced the Swastika, the first commercial board.</i>
Bob Simmons 1940s	<i>Adapted naval architecture to board design, still influential. A "mad genius."</i>
Joe Quigg 1940s-1950s	<i>Innovator of hardwood longboards, polyurethane and pintails, outfitted 1940s surfaris.</i>
Dale Velzy 1950s	<i>Postwar materials helped created the nimble "Pig." Credited with first surf shop.</i>
Hobart Alter 1950s	<i>Started in his parents' Laguna Beach pad. Launched a definitive brand.</i>
George Greenough 1960s	<i>Pioneer of fin design key to Nat Young's watershed "Magic Sam" board.</i>
Bruce Jones 1960s-2010s	<i>Hobie vet, credited as the shaper of the modern longboard.</i>
Cher Pendarvis 1960s-current	<i>Surfing mag's first female designer—an expert on handmade boards.</i>
Jeff Clark 1970s-current	<i>Master of Mavericks, titanic NorCal wave. Shapes big guns for huge surf.</i>
Al Merrick 1980s-current	<i>Founder of Channel Islands, go-to for champs and amateurs alike.</i>
Danny Hess 1990s-current	<i>Gorgeous wood creations, true to San Francisco's Outer Sunset scene.</i>
Ashley Lloyd Thompson Current	<i>A Santa Cruz shaper of aesthetic refinement and sustainability ambition.</i>



REDWOODS OF NOTE

GENERAL SHERMAN <i>Sequoia National Park</i>	Largest tree alive, named by a naturalist who served under Civil War general William Tecumseh Sherman.
GENERAL GRANT <i>Kings Canyon National Park</i>	Second-largest living tree, declared the “Nation’s Christmas Tree” by President Calvin Coolidge in 1926.
HYPERION <i>Redwood National Park</i>	Named for a Greek Titan, the world’s tallest known living tree was discovered in 2006. Location kept secret for its protection.
CHANDELIER TREE <i>Drive-Thru Tree Park</i>	Named for the shape of its branches, among the “tunnel trees” carved out for cars to drive through
LUNA <i>Humboldt County</i>	Activist Julia Butterfly Hill lived in this 1,000-year-old tree for over two years to stave off clear-cutting
HOLLOW LOG <i>Balch Park</i>	Nineteenth-century soldiers used this 15-foot-wide, naturally hollowed fallen sequoia as a headquarters
CATHEDRAL TREE <i>Trees of Mystery</i>	Nine trees growing together in a semicircle around the stump of one huge original tree that has since rotted away
CHRISTMAS TREE <i>Humboldt Redwoods State Park</i>	Rare albino redwood, or “ghost tree,” a genetic inability to produce chlorophyll leaves its needles white

LEXICON

HEARTWOODThe central part of the tree; dead, but does not decay
FAIRY RINGRedwoods surrounding a long dead parent tree; family circle
BURLSKnobby masses on trunks; store genetic material
UNDERSTORYShrub population below old growth; brilliant rhododendron
EPIPHYTEPlant using another as its host; roots never touch ground
CAMBIUMLayer between bark and heartwood, growing part of the tree
VIRGIN FORESTWoodland that has never been logged



GOLDEN CALIFORNIA

16-DAY

Crashing waves for miles. Bayside towns, somehow rebellious *and* relaxed. Craggy ranges, shielding sequoias. Anywhere else, any one of these would take pride of place. True to gilded myth, California has it all. Partake in all the fabulous clichés [wine! surfing!], but also steer toward flinty northern hamlets, twangy Central Valley, and Lassen's sleeping volcano. Under the mighty Bear Flag, you've got quite a journey ahead.

-
1. OAKLAND
 2. WINE COUNTRY
 3. UKIAH
 4. THE LOST COAST
 5. EUREKA
 6. YREKA
 7. LASSEN
 8. NEVADA CITY
 9. DEATH VALLEY
 10. BAKERSFIELD
 11. LOS ANGELES
 12. SANTA BARBARA
 13. SAN LUIS OBISPO
 14. BIG SUR
 15. SAN JOSE
 16. SAN FRANCISCO

DAY

1

OAKLAND

Journalist Pendarvis Harshaw talks about his native town and favorite spots to unwind.

Oakland is communal, family-oriented. An outpost for the South for decades. Entrepreneurial in spirit, too—it breeds hustlers. I grew up seeing whatever Too Short did, thinking maybe I can do that with books. My love for Oakland is complicated. Everything is political. The population's changing. It's small enough to wrap your hands around, but large enough to have an impact. Ron Dellums said that.

MIDDLE HARBOR SHORELINE PARK

"If it's sunny and the wind isn't blowing yet, you can see the ships coming in, the fog rolling over the hills in the city," says Harshaw of the former naval supply depot.

THE SOUND ROOM

Decadeslong labor of love for Karen Van Leuven and Robert Bradsby, whose Broadway jazz club first started in their Oakland home.

JOAQUIN MILLER PARK

Named for its 19th c. poet-owner Harshaw describes as "kind of mystical—there's a pyramid up there. A spot where you can see the entire bay."

EAST SIDE OF LAKE MERRITT ON A SUNDAY

"I ride my bike over, see who's there, plop down on someone's blanket, start playing Uno. It's a place to socialize, have a picnic, have a drink, bring a book and never read it" recalls the journalist.



DAY

2

WINE COUNTRY

Napa is absolutely worth a visit and so are the chiller wine regions nearby.

NAPA VALLEY

Take advantage of the scenery with a tasting-and-picnic combo. Choice spots: Chateau Montelena, Rombauer Vineyards and Rutherford Hill Winery. Hike above the valley at Skyline Wilderness Park, where olive and fig trees were planted by former Napa State Hospital patients. Post-hike, throw open your terrace doors and bask in total luxury at Auberge de Soleil.

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ANDERSON VALLEY

From Cloverdale to the coast, Hwy 128 winds through a particularly gorgeous stretch. Stop for Pinot Noir at Goldeneye, Riesling at Phillips Hill or Gewürztraminer at Husch Vineyards' old horse barn. Later, revive with some restorative apple-picking at the Philo Apple Farm.

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SONOMA COUNTY

Napa's less-fussy viticultural cousin overfloweth. Sip a Pinot under the old rafters at Belden Barns, a family-owned, small-batch winery. Zo Wines, in Healdsburg, offers lodging. Santa Rosa's Balletto Vineyards carved out a baseball diamond amid its vines for Sunday games. And don't forget to raise a glass at Scribe's Hacienda, the perfect day's end.

DAY

3

UKIAH

The mineral hot springs resort has long offered healing and escape for the Bay Area chic.

Gilbert Ashoff's life changed in 1971, when, on a trip to Paris, he tasted a bottle of Vichy Célestins spring water. "I'd never had bottled mineral water before. I was hooked," he says. Ashoff and his now-wife, Marjorie, spent the next three years sampling every type of mineral water they could get their hands on. In California, they drove to 33 springs before coming across the rare, naturally carbonated hot spring at Ukiah's **VICHY SPRINGS RESORT**. He bought the property and set about restoring its historic buildings and alkaline, sodium bicarbonate-rich mineral baths, purported to cure all manner of ills. Guests can ask to see the ancient travertine grotto where Mark Twain is pictured sampling the water with a ladle in his white linen suit.

EXPLORE YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

By Daniel Duane

Four hours east of San Francisco, high in the Sierra Nevada, Yosemite Valley carves a trough 3,000 feet deep in hard white granite. Waterfalls plummet down glacier-polished cliffs, climbers dangle from ropes and families swim in the cold, clear Merced River as it bends lazily through tall-grass meadows. Meanwhile, hundreds of square miles all around Yosemite Valley offer needle-point summits in blue mountain sky, wildflower pastures and white-sand beaches, and the best food you'll ever eat at a gas station.



FREE SOLO

2018

Elizabeth Chai
Vasarhelyi &
Jimmy Chin



THE YOSEMITE

1912

John Muir's
contemplations on the
"Range of Light"



MERCED RIVER, YOSEMITE VALLEY

1866

Albert
Bierstadt

DAY

1

MARIPOSA GROVE Giant sequoias belong in the same category as the Grand Canyon: tourist attractions so obvious and old-school that you're inclined to pass, and so astonishing that passing would be tragic. Also like the Grand Canyon, they're easy to see: Just park in the dusty lot, follow the trail out of hot sun into shady woods and have the classic experience of seeing a few really big trees and thinking, *Gee, those really are big trees, but I'm still not sure I'm feeling what I'm supposed to feel.* Keep walking, because those weren't giant sequoias. A little farther down the trail, you'll see trees bigger than anything you've imagined possible. Stop, stare and let their sheer scale wake up your sense of wonder.



DOLORES HUERTA

CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST

GROWING UP in Stockton trained me. Police would stop and search us because they didn't want to see the white girls hanging out with us.

MY MOTHER STARTED the first Mexican American chamber of commerce. My dad, everywhere he went, would organize a union.

THERE ARE ONLY four or five places on the whole planet where you have the weather you have here in the San Joaquin Valley.

IT ALLOWS US to produce so much of the world's food. And yet we have one of the highest poverty rates in the nation.

WE WERE MEETING with labor leaders and attorneys—Cesar [Chavez] was fasting to protest an Arizona law that prevented farmworkers from striking. They kept saying, "No, no se puede"—meaning, we can't.

I REPLIED, "Sí, se puede. Sí, se puede." I repeated it at the rally later on and it caught on.

I WAS ON the executive board for the UFW. Every time one of the guys made a sexist remark I would put a check in my notes.

AT THE END I'd say, "During the course of the meeting, you guys made 58 sexist remarks." The men were stunned.

IN 1988, we were protesting pesticides in San Francisco. President [H.W.] Bush was staying at a hotel there. We were singing and chanting, then the police moved in.

THE POLICE OFFICER hit me so hard he broke my ribs and my spleen was shattered. I almost died because I was bleeding internally.

I WAS ARRESTED recently with home care workers in Fresno.

WHEN I WAS a little girl, I wanted to be a flamenco dancer. I dance every opportunity I can get.

YES, I'VE BEEN to Burning Man. I love Burning Man.



RON HOWARD

DIRECTOR

I REMEMBER DRIVING from Queens in a '52 Plymouth. Painted Desert, Grand Canyon, over the Mojave Desert and into Los Angeles. I was 4.

WE LIVED IN a tiny one-floor apartment in Burbank.

MY FATHER WAS always writing, memorizing scripts. The most famous thing he wrote was for *The Flintstones*.

WHEN *The Andy Griffith Show* opened, we moved to Hollywood, so we could walk to the studio.

EVENTUALLY THEY BOUGHT a three-bedroom in Burbank. It had a little pool, a big luxury.

MOM AND DAD weren't dazzled by the Hollywood scene.

DAD'S HONESTY AS an actor is what I most admired.

I CHOSE DIRECTING because I loved bearing the responsibility, win or lose. And the director

was the person who got to hang out with everybody.

THE PROMISE storytellers make to an audience is that they will be captivated, swept away.

FILMMAKING is logistically awkward.

TOM HANKS IS like Joe DiMaggio. He makes it look so easy, but is wildly intelligent. That combination is remarkable.

I REWATCH *The Graduate* every so often. It's sublime.

MY MOM HAD heart problems, and they knew she was coming to the end, so she asked my dad to go on a car trip to see the redwoods.

I ASKED WHY and she told me, "They are my church."

AND THE CRAZY thing was, when she passed, without knowing about that trip, a friend sent me a note saying, "A redwood has been planted in your mother's name." It was Robin Williams.

GREGG BOYDSTON

H O T S H O T

I WAS WORKING for Apple and decided to make a change. I loaded up the car and went up to Northern California.

I WAS BOUNCING between campgrounds, waiting for fire calls, hoping to get hired by the Forest Service.

THE INSTRUCTOR SHOWED us a PBS documentary on wildland firefighting, what a hotshot crew does. That got my interest.

IT'S WEIRD 'CAUSE, it is kind of a beautiful thing to see even though it's so destructive.

IT'S LOUD. You can feel heat radiating, there's an ember cast, your eyes, nose are running.

OTHER TIMES, you're two ridges over on a mountaintop and you can't even see the fire.

THE MAJORITY OF the work is creating handline for hundreds of feet, even miles.

IT'S BASICALLY A hiking trail.

You've got a swath of saw cut that removes all the bigger fuel, bushes, branches, trees.

YOUR SUMMER IS gone when you sign up for something like this.

ANYTIME YOU'RE NOT fighting fire you're doing some type of thinning project.

AS TIME GOES on, people live closer and closer to where these things happen.

I'M HERE. ALL my family's here. All the firefighters that are fighting these fires in California are living here.

AT SOME POINT we may need to start thinking about letting fires burn when no one's in danger. It's hard for people to see the benefit.

WE WERE IN Northern California and got a call to head back towards Yosemite. They frown upon helicopters in the park and were talking about looking



for the Mist Trail. That's like a 16-mile hike. We're all laughing, making where's-the-helicopter jokes.

.....

ALL GEARED UP, we walked the John Muir Trail as if we're going to summit Half Dome. When we got to the falls, we re-

alized the fire was off to the east. At that point they flew us up onto this big granite knob.

.....

WE SPENT NINE days up there spiked out—camping, waking up and fighting fires. Eye level with Half Dome.

HERE WE COME

Written by **RACHEL KHONG**

I WAS 16 WHEN I first heard the song “California,” by the band Phantom Planet. I lived in Southern California, in a suburb 40 minutes from Los Angeles called Diamond Bar, which often smelled of cow shit, because there were rolling brown hills nearby, and cows in those hills, shitting. My family had always lived outside Los Angeles proper: desert towns of desolate strip malls and unnaturally watered, unsuccessful lawns—no beaches or convertibles or sunsets reflecting off ocean water. Mine wasn’t the California that people wrote songs about.

At 16, I’d never had a boyfriend. Desperately, I wanted one. I was in love with a boy who, every morning, sat in his red Jeep near my Ford Taurus station wagon, outside our high school, awaiting first period. I don’t remember his name and I’m not certain I ever knew it. We never once spoke. One morning, I heard Phantom Planet’s “California” playing softly from his car and was spellbound. I bought the CD from my local Target.

Later, “California” became the theme song for a hit television show about high school students living in Orange County, literally 20 minutes—but figuratively a world—away. Phantom Planet consisted of five floppy-haired men-children from Los Angeles, the more-real California. Ostensibly the song was about loving California so much you wanted to come back to it. And sing about it! The chorus, insofar as there was one, was “California, California! Here we come!” The message was exuberant and uncomplicated. Their simple longing for our state struck envy in me. They wanted to come to California, for the simple fact that it was *where they belonged*. I wanted to belong somewhere, though I didn’t yet know where.

For them, California was a place to come back to. For me, it was a too-known quantity, and therefore a place to leave.

I headed east for college. Connecticut, here we come! My roommate was from London, and my classmates had grown up in cities

like New York and Chicago and Boston—cities that sounded mythical to me, the way California may have sounded to others. Somehow they'd already learned to drink and smoke and make oral arguments in college-style seminars. They owned proper galoshes and knew how to maintain their balance on icy sidewalks. My peers thought they knew what I meant when I said I was *from California*, but whatever picture they had in their mind was a far cry from the truth. Anyway, I was doing imagining of my own: Those kids from New York and Chicago and Boston and the real California—they'd gone to high school house parties like the ones we'd all seen on *The O.C.* And these fellow students from the real California may as well have been older actresses impersonating college students. They Knew Things. I was untenably far behind, and terrified.

What I wanted was to have my own story, stories I imagined my peers already had. Impossibly, I wanted the story to coalesce before I'd even really lived it.

I caught up. I listened to music and attended film screenings and read short-story collections in the library, where everyone else was—and where I should have been—studying. It snowed in Connecticut, so it could have been snowing when I watched the 1994 film *Chungking Express* for the first time. Let's say that it was. It may not have been the first time I heard "California Dreamin'" by the Mamas and the Papas, but it was the first time I really *listened* to it. Here I was in Connecticut, watching a film about people in Hong Kong, listening to a song about California.

Released in 1965 by a quartet of California hippies, "California Dreamin'" is an archetypical song about my state, one of many. California songs are less about a place than the *idea* of a place, even when they're sung by people who've lived here and should know better. Like "California," the premise of "California Dreamin'" is simple: The Mamas and the Papas are in a cold place, longing for the safety and warmth of California.

"California dreamin' on such a winter's day," the Mamas and the Papas sang. While it was true that California was warmer than other places, this was an oversimplified narrative. "I'd be safe and warm [I'd be safe and warm], if I was in LA [if I was in LA]." You wouldn't be safe, necessarily, though it's tempting to believe.

An oversimplified narrative is part of the attraction. Songs aren't written about Oregon or Washington—also beautiful places—at quite the same clip. Maybe California gets all the songs because it's well-endowed, syllable-wise. Maybe it's just that California is ideal for mythologizing. There's the fantasy not only of the place itself, but who you could be in that place: successful, beautiful, carefree. And warm.

What writers of California songs want to believe is that a place can be a shortcut to identity. I had this in common with them. If I could find the context to which I belonged, I thought, I could become whoever I was supposed to be.

I left California, and came back. I left again, came back again.

**THERE'S THE STORY
YOU SING ABOUT,
AND THEN THERE'S
THE LIVING OF IT.**

It's possible I listened to Phantom Planet's "California" each time I did. Now I live in San Francisco, a city that tourists visit and songs get written about. According to the songs, San Francisco is a city where you put flowers in your

hair and leave your heart. Listen, I get it: It's all eucalyptus trees and unreal blue water and perfect light. Driving, for the hundredth time, over the Golden Gate Bridge, past the bicyclists on their rented bikes, pedaling slowly, still makes me hold breath. Once I'm across the bridge my mind swims again in its minutiae: to-dos, anxieties, all the other human things. Flowers in my hair would never stay put. My heart literally goes where I go.

It wasn't exactly that I decided I'd live here, I just stopped leaving. I fell in love with a fixer-upper north of San Francisco, near the Sonoma Coast—a little A-frame cabin amid towering redwoods. Buying the house was making a commitment to be here, and this was terrifying to me. I was dating someone I'd dated unsuccessfully twice before and wasn't sure it'd pan out. I wanted to be a writer—I was working on a novel—but unsure I could pull it off. I lacked the clarity I'd always pictured myself, as an adult, having. And the choices I'd longed for, as a teenager, turned out not to be so straightforward, either. One choice meant another life not lived. A choice could be the wrong one. I wondered if I'd made a series of wrong ones.



I tore out drywall and painted cabinets and watched YouTube videos to learn plumbing. I stacked firewood alone and drank wine from plastic takeout containers. I slept sometimes with a chef's knife under my bed, in case I had to stab an intruder in self-defense. In the middle of the night I'd see brown spiders and Google image search what brown recluses looked like, scaring myself awake.

My soundtrack to all this was Joni Mitchell's *Blue* album. I listened to the same side when I was too tired to flip it—always the side with the song “California.” In the song, Joni is elsewhere—in Paris, in Greece—and homesick for California. “California, I’m coming home,” she sings. “I’m going to see the folks I dig / I’ll even kiss a sunset pig / California, I’m coming home.”

I’ve heard Joni was referring to a real pet pig. The pig’s owner ran a bar in Malibu, close to where she lived.

There is, to me, a sadness in that song, when Joni sings, “Oh will you take me as I am? Will you take me as I am?” Maybe I hear it because I’m alone—sometimes happy, sometimes lonely—beneath towering ancient redwoods. To me it’s about how hard it is to live here because of the beauty. There’s a disconnect in the juxtaposition—pathetic fallacy, or mimetic fallacy, or whatever the fallacy is that says that it shouldn’t be sunny outside when you’re sad, or the other way around: that you shouldn’t be sad when a place is this beautiful. Except there is, I suspect, no way around that. There’s the story you sing about, and then there’s the living of it.

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