

Trip to San Diego (and La Jolla), then to Santa Monica California

February 2020

This trip started by flying into San Diego and Lyfting to our hotel, the **La Valencia**. This lovely, historic hotel was opened in 1927 when La Jolla was just a tiny village perched on the cliffs. The movie industry was just starting and it became a favorite place for the rich and famous to visit and for shooting movies on the beaches and ocean below. It is a quaint hotel, but a bit noisy, especially in "Villa 10" facing the Coast Boulevard. We got moved to "Villa 6", which was quieter. The history, the staff and the ambiance make this a great place to stay.

San Diego Zoo is amazing, being a research facility where they have many breeding programs for endangered species. The best example is the California Condor. In 1987 the last wild condor was captured and the breeding effort started with the 22 birds left in the world. Last year, the 1000th chick fledged! Over 800 have been freed in Nevada, three sites in California and in Baja California. They are returning into the Rockies vigorously and at each of the other sites. They only lay one egg every two years, so when any one dies, it is very hard on the population. Lead from hunting bullets is their downfall, so California outlawed all lead in hunting ammunition. Other states are more reluctant, apparently due to pressure from the NRA.

San Diego Zoo Safari Park: This is an extension of the Zoo with almost 10 times the acreage. They have communities of animals that live together in various parts of the world, wandering in huge fields. They also have breeding programs for endangered species. Be sure to wear comfortable shoes, because both are very hilly and you will walk miles and miles.

La Jolla as a town is full of great dining places.

- Lunch at "George's" (5*) where we enjoyed Caesar Salad with shrimp and bbq sort ribs.
- Dinner at "Burger Lounge" (5*) where the food is wonderful
- Dinner at "La Dolce Vita" (5*) where the spaghetti with meat sauce and the chicken Parmesan were amazing. Great place!
- Lunch & Dinner at Dukes (5*) where the fish & chips were fabulous and chicken rib combo great. Dinner fish and tuna, both great.
- Lunch at Café Coyote (3*) in old town where the Mexican food was okay but not out of the ordinary. Very touristy.
- Lunch at "el Pescador fish market" (3*) where the local Halibut sandwich was good but the yellow snapper was over cooked.

Santa Monica, staying at the **Fairmont Miramar hotel** which is a very nice hotel just blocks from the Santa Monica Pier and the “3rd street promenade” shopping area. There are many great restaurants nearby, but not much shopping. Seeing our son Ken and his friends was so much fun.

Santa Monica also has many great restaurants.

- Dinner at Tar & Roses (6*). OMG, perhaps the best meal we have ever eaten! Whole snapper, the duck amazing with side great.
- Lunch at “Shoop’s” (5*) where Shoop Cobb salad and Mediterranean Salad both great.
- Lunch at Crimson (5*). Great strawberry cranberry salad with chicken shawarma and a great chicken shawarma wrap.
- Lunch at Wexler’s Deli (5*). Corned beef and pastrami both wonderful. They cure their own meats and they are hand cut with great bread.
- Dinner at Crimson (5*) where Chicken kabobs were fabulous which were orange spiced and wonderful. They also have a strawberry and cranberry salad with chicken shawarma that was scrumptious.
- Dinner at Cassia (1*), which is PURE pretense and NO substance. All foods were burned, very small portions and grossly over-priced with rude wait staff.