

San Francisco (2013)

Keeb and I figured we should have one last break before the year ended and he chose San Francisco. We really enjoyed the various facets of this interesting city and took in some of the natural beauty nearby.

Sightseeing

The city tour gave us the opportunity to visit some of the attractions that appealed to us like the California Academy of Sciences, the Aquarium at the Bay, Pier 39 with its famed sea lions lolling about and holding court. Keeb glimpsed the Painted Ladies on our way in from the airport. We were also impressed by the sheer opulence of the Palace of Fine Arts.

We also saw the Golden Gate Bridge from different angles as we sailed under it during the harbour cruise and also drove over it to get to Muir Woods, a recommendation from one of our friends and we were very pleased we took her advice to visit them. This was a very enjoyable day as the tour allowed us to wander around the woods for an hour after a short drive over the bridge. It was very cold in the woods so we stopped for hot drinks and the best cornbread corn bread Keeb had eaten. Their cafe was very green so no drink lids were allowed. It was awesome to learn that some of the trees we were seeing were thousands of years old.

We decided to spend a day in San Jose – the Amtrack station was behind our hotel so it was easy to take a train. The scenery was quite different to any we had experienced before and included salt flats. When we got to San Jose we went to the city centre and visited the San Jose Museum of Art. The good news is it was free that day. The most important exhibit was by an Indian artist (Jitish Kallat) who had taken thousands of photos of progressively eaten roti. Keeb and I thought maybe he was showing the waxing and waning of the moon but when I finally checked out the website it was literally about daily bread. I liked our interpretation better. We also visited the "Tech Museum of Innovation" where we saw an interesting IMAX film of The Hidden Universe.

We took a scenic drive along the coast from San Francisco to Monterey and finally to Carmel. When we got to Monterey, we stopped at Cannery Row and had a stroll around. There were a few small houses with period furniture from when the canners had lived there. Other than these houses, there were some warehouses that looked like they hearkened back to John Steinbeck's time. Of course, the Starbucks was probably a more recent addition. I've always thought of V.S. Naipaul's "Miguel Street" was reminiscent of "Cannery Row". Both stories contain oddball characters tied to this one street that they all inhabit.

The drive from Monterey to Carmel boasted some spectacular coastal views and I was reminded of Toco with one big exception. To me the sea and rocks along the Toco coast are typically shades of grey so I think of those scenes as seen with black and white film. In comparison, the scenes along the California coast were in full colour. The sea and sky were bright blue, and the rocks ranged from ochre to burnt sienna.

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Entertainment

We went to the play "Dead Certain" which was held in a pop-up theatre in a hotel. We had a few nervous moments when we thought that we were going to be late. Visions of being denied seating were in my head, but we managed to get to the play just in time. It turned out that they probably would have waited for us as the total audience, including us, was seven. We enjoyed the play.

The actors chatted with the audience afterwards and asked us where we were from. They had not had Trinidadians attend one of their plays before and their staff took a photo of us with the actors and they sent it to me on email.

We also went to Cobb's Comedy club to see "Three Incredibly Handsome Comedians". The show was really enjoyable, and one comic was quoting from "Princess Bride" which is always a plus for me. However, we were again part of a very tiny audience. I suspect we visited in the off-season for shows.

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