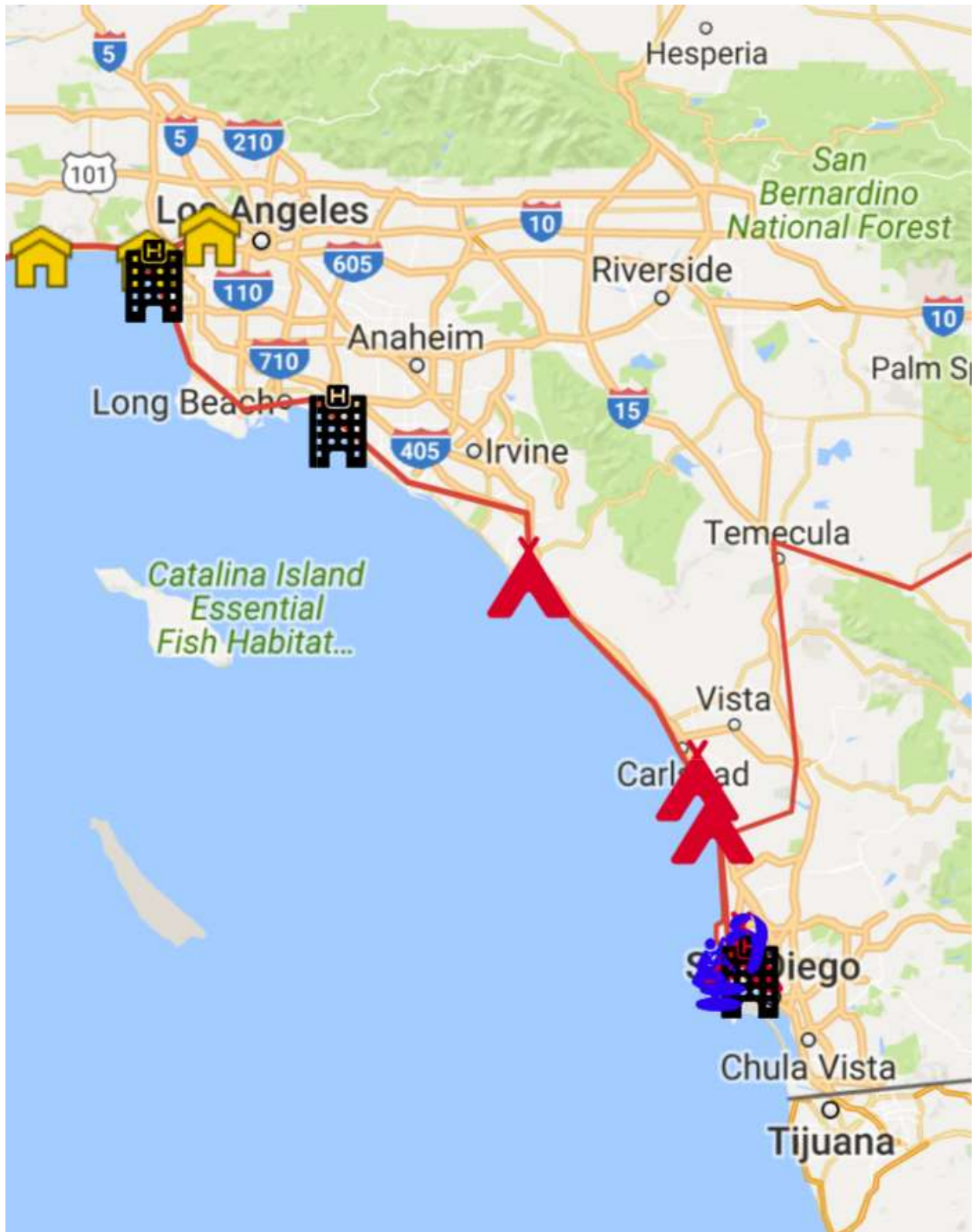


Season 4 – Part 4. The West Coast from San Diego to LA!



Sa 12.12.2015, day 152. Southwards via La Jolla to San Diego.

We got up to a slow start and biked southwards along the coast towards San Diego. There were lots and lots of racing bikes on the road and almost everyone wanted to know where we had come from. We stopped off in La Jolla to enjoy the waves that were quite impressive and watch all the surfers doing their stuff. We took some small roads right along the coast and past one huge villa after the other. Unfortunately, the Warm Shower we had contacted couldn't host us, so we had to go for our "plan B", which was staying at a huge camping called Campland. When we got there, we found that it would knock us back 55\$ per night and not 40\$ as we saw on the internet. Finally, after some negotiating by Siria, they gave us a spot on a parking lot for 50\$. We were both a bit pissed off by this rip-off. But at least there was a nice Jacuzzi...







Su 13.12.2015, day 153. Relaxing day doing nothing much

We got up quite early, had breakfast and went to the camp ground's café to continue writing Christmas cards and to find a better place to stay in San Diego. Siria found a cheap Motel, so she booked the room, we packed our stuff and headed off slowly slowly to the Motel. There we dumped most of our stuff and headed for Mission Beach to sample the atmosphere. Unfortunately there was not enough wind to go kite surfing, but we checked out all the spots. There was a storm forecast for the night and great wind for the following day. We toasted some bagels on the beach and watched the sunset, then went back to the hotel, bought a six-pack and a large tub of ice cream and had a bit of a party in the room while listening to the rain and wind outside. Siria didn't notice much of the storm however, as she was fast asleep about 2 seconds after finishing the last spoon of ice cream.



Mo 14.12.2015, day 154. Fantastic long day of Kite Surfing!

I was very disappointed to wake up to almost no wind at all. This was absolutely not according to the forecast, that had announced very strong 30 kn winds. Was I ever going to get kite surfing? Nevertheless we headed out with all the kite equipment, stopping at a surf shop where Siria bought an excellent wet suit and then headed for the kite spots in the lagoon. There was no wind whatsoever. We then continued out to Mission Beach, again almost no wind. We decided to drown our disappointment with

some ice cream. Right at the end we spotted a kites in the air. However it turned out to be a beginner, who was learning to control the kite with an instructor, but the wind WAS getting stronger! So I unpacked everything and gave it a go. The wind was not really strong enough to pick up enough speed and the waves were really big. But I was more or less kiting! I got knocked over again and again by the waves and had a tough time controlling the kite while tumbling in the surf and trying not to lose the board. Also getting back up again before the next wave came rolling in was tough as there really wasn't enough wind (or I simply am not yet good enough for these conditions!).

After about 1-2 h I got knocked down badly, lost control of the kite. It slammed down into the surf and got turned inside out. That was it, I was giving up. The instructor, who was still with his student and undoubtedly laughing to himself while watching my desperate attempts in the surf, suggested we try the lagoon, as the wind should now have picked up. So we did and found perfect wind and about half a dozen kites doing their thing. Now it was Siria's turn. She was a bit nervous to start with as there were other kites and also houses close to the beach. After a somewhat nervous start and quite spectacularly being dragged up the beach towards the houses, she finally got good control of the kite, grabbed the board and even managed to get up on it for a really elegant, albeit somewhat short run! Then it was my turn again and I had a great time zipping around in great conditions. Just before the sun set, I landed the kite, we cooked Quinoa and Rice on the beach and had a wonderful sunset dinner. We were both too tired to go downtown or over to Ocean Beach, so we agreed to have a quiet evening doing some planning and writing up diaries. It was an absolutely great day, and I think we proved once again, the concept of Bike & Kite CAN work!!







Tu 15.12.2015, day 155. Up the West Coast...

The ride up the coast was actually not that great. Most of the riding is on really big roads with lots and lots of traffic. It was nice riding through the campus of the University of San Diego and sometimes there was a bike path along the coast, but most of the time we spent on the bike lane of the busy No 1 highway. We started quite late and arrived at the campsite in South Carlsbad just before sunset. Unfortunately we didn't do our research well and found out that they have no Hiker Biker Campsites, so we had to dish out 35\$. We cooked a pasta salad, that we eat down at the beach watching a great sunset. Then we went across to Starbucks (yes, again!) with the main aim to start thinking about what we want to do next year. Because this is really very very open for now...







We 16.12.2015, day 156. Up the West Coast, more of the same...

There seems to be a thermal wind that starts blowing southwards down the coast sometime during the afternoon. So the trick is to get up early and use the calm conditions in the morning. So this is what we did. Again the ride was not much to write home about. Big roads with lots of traffic. From time to time passing a nice beach, and sure enough, sometime around lunchtime the wind set in making the ride significantly tougher. We had dinner just before arriving at the campground at Doheny State Park, where we saw some touring bicyclists and got chatting. They were from Quebec and started in Prince George and are heading all the way to Argentina. It was nice sharing experiences and finding out about some small little bike hacks. They also let us share their camp spot, so we enjoyed a free night. The evening was again spent in front of laptops collecting information on how to continue the trip.



Th 17.12.2015, day 157. Reaching the suburbs of LA.

Also this ride turned out to be very similar to the previous days. We passed through a military base to avoid using the interstate and passed some nice beach towns. There were no campsites, so we checked into a 60\$ Motel in Sunset Beach that was the cheapest and actually quite funky. It seemed completely unchanged since the 50ties and had an almost posh retro design feel about it. I went for a nice run along the beach and then we cooked noodles on the balcony of the Motel. I also shaved off my beard...



Fr 18.12.2015, day 158. Into LA!

Most of the ride into LA was actually very nice as there are bike paths that run right along the beach. Between Long Beach and the beaches of LA we took a short cut through some industrial areas, but even this was not a bad ride as the roads here are all quite wide. Biking in LA is actually a piece of cake compared to New York or Newark. We spent the night at Jeremiah's place (a friend of mine from my Montreal days) in Santa Monica and had a great time talking about all sorts of things. I had no idea he was into all these things! Improvisation and stand-up comedy, really interesting artwork done by pen on large canvases, and finally we got onto my favorite subject of Urban Farming, Permaculture and all this. It is really becoming a recurring topic and I realize that I am really very enthusiastic about it! Turns out Jeremiah just completed a certification on the topic (is there anything he hasn't done??) and pointed me towards some really good web resources. I've got my work cut out for me!







Sa 19. 12.2015, day 159. Arriving at Tim's place. First big goal of our trip accomplished!

In the morning we had some more really long discussions about permaculture while enjoying some coffee toast and eggs and then said our good byes and headed down to Santa Monica Pier to meet up with Tim. It was really great meeting him here in this –for me- very foreign setting that has become home for him.

We biked to his pad where we met up with Megan and slowly settled in, went for a quick stroll to the shops, crossed the very kitschy grove mall complete with lights, music, colorful fountain and huge Christmas tree. Then went home for some nibbles, beer and later a delicious risotto!

It's really really nice to be here and it somehow feels surreal, that we have been travelling for almost 160 days and have crossed all the landmass between here and Switzerland by bike or train. One of the things I wanted to find out when I left was how big the earth really is. But somehow, even traveling only by bike, train and boat, I still can't grasp the feeling of size...



Su 20.12.2015, day 160. Wonderful day in LA.

The day started with the most delicious bread I have had for a very very long time, home baked by Tim. We then went for the weekly shopping at the Farmer's Market followed by an absolutely great bike ride with Tim and Megan up north into the hills, taking in all the sights and views. I never imagined that one could be out in the nature so quickly in this gigantic sprawling city. Just before we all died of starvation we got to a funky little restaurant and managed to order some fantastic burgers only minutes before the place closed for the afternoon.

That night I stayed up very late finding out about Sepp Holzer's Permaculture farm in Austria and all sorts of other smart ideas people come up with to grow their own food. Really quite inspiring!



21-26.12.2015, days 161-166. Christmas in LA

We spent absolutely wonderful days in LA with Tim and Megan. Food (to come back to my favourite topic) was always absolutely delicious, be it home baked bread or bagels, curry, fish, soup, tajine or all the other things, we got to go to some yoga classes, after which I had pains in muscles that I didn't even know existed. We did some trips in and around LA and I realized that there is far more to this city than

cars and freeways. In fact LA is simply bustling with all sorts of interesting places if you only know where to go. And also it is extremely bike friendly.

Christmas was a wonderful party with Megan's parents and sister, lots of great food (again), drinks and also some splendid carol singing!











































26-2.1.2016, days 166-172. New Year in Venice Beach

Partly by coincidence, partly intentionally some friends of ours were coming over to LA for Christmas holidays and we rented an AirBnB apartment in Venice Beach. Again we had a fantastic time there. Totally different from our normal routine of biking and camping. For me it felt so strange that our friends left Switzerland only 12h prior to arriving in LA, while we had spent over 160 days, travelling almost non-stop by bike, train, boat and also plane to get here. Highlights of the stay were certainly seeing Star Wars in i-max 3D in the Chinese Theatre and our New Year's party, that we got all dressed up for (I was wearing a Tutu) only to find that it was not a fancy dress party 😊

One thing I personally really enjoyed was sleeping out under the stars on the roof of the house to the sound of the pacific waves rolling in and the pigeons shuffling around in their hiding place under the wooden deck and waking up to their coos just before the sun started rising up over the ocean.







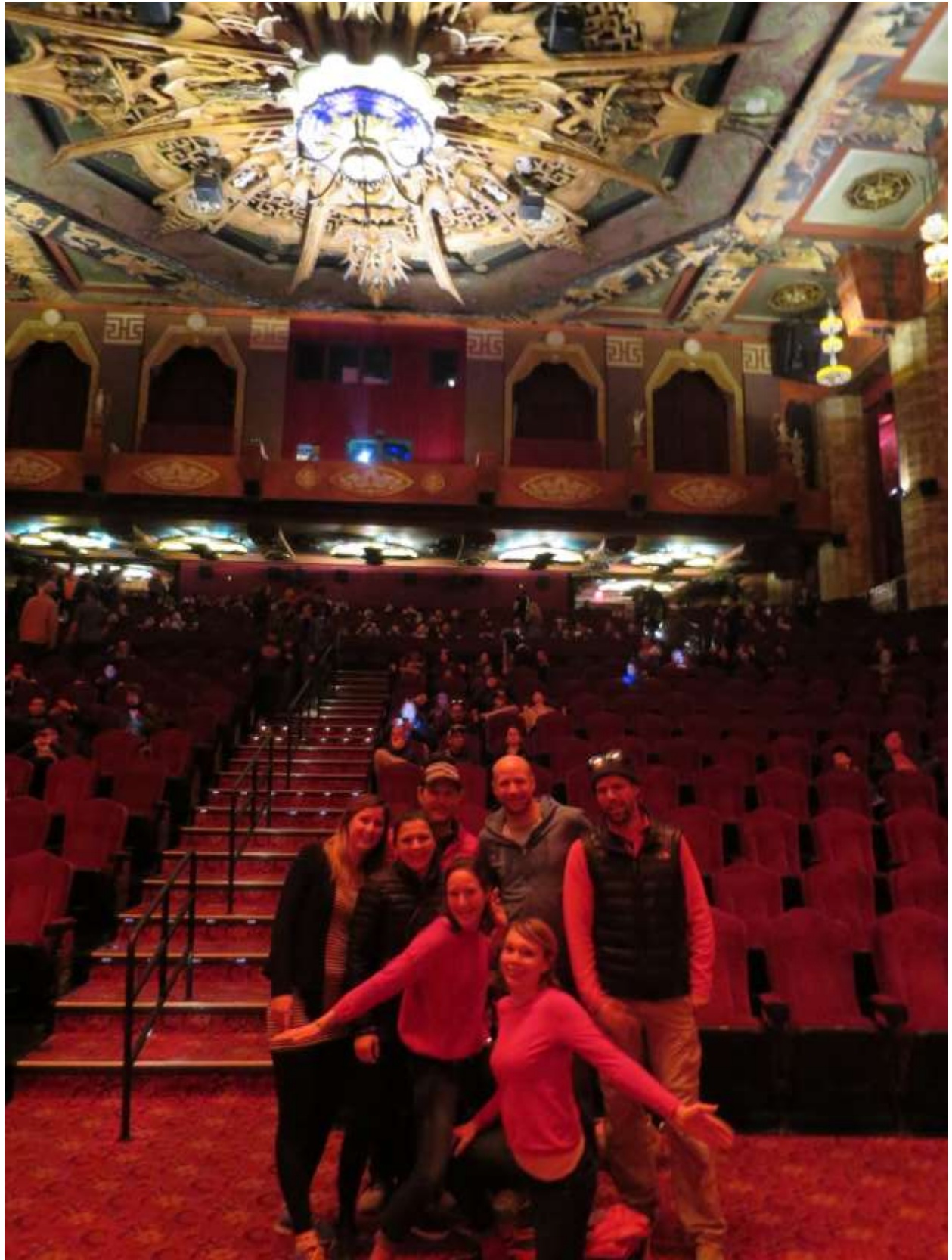




















Final thoughts

Thinking back to that guy in Germany who laughed at us when we told him we were biking to LA, I also thought that it was a far off crazy idea. I never really thought that we would make it, and certainly not with a trailer and kite surfing equipment. While biking I never realized that we were covering distance and getting closer to our goal. Somehow we simply got into a travelling routine, dealing with day to day situations, like finding a place to spend the night, making sure we ate well, maintaining the bikes, washing clothes, enjoying the wind on our faces and the sun (or rain) on our backs. Home was wherever the road took us and we met so many fantastic people on the way, many of whom have become good friends even if we only spent a short time with them. And now suddenly we find ourselves actually in LA, this place that was always our far off surreal goal.

The obvious question now is: Where next? And on this point we both fully agree. We want to bike back to Switzerland while continuing to head westwards. Which route we want to take is not decided and also not relevant. What we have learnt so far is that making fixed plans is not the way we want to travel. What we are also starting to learn is that anything is possible. From here onwards we can simply go wherever we want to. Once again I realize how incredibly fortunate I am to be able to live this dream.