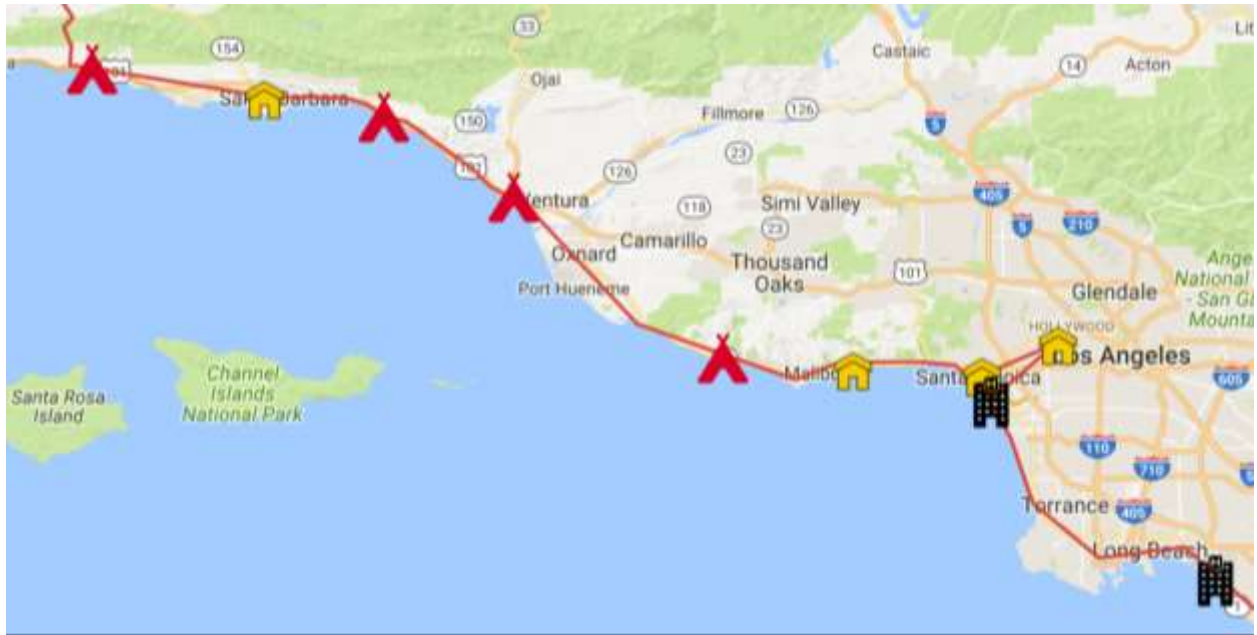


Season 5 – Part 1. Out of LA and up the West Coast of the USA



Su 3.1.2016, day 175. Sunday bike with the Wabi-Fixie Crew.

The big thing of the day was a ride out with Tim and some of his Wabi fixed gear bike riding friends. We met up with them close to LA River after once again riding through down town LA. We biked up towards Pasadena along the LA River and over Chevy Chase Drive and all the way back again along the Arroyo Seco finishing up in a wonderful place for coffee and breakfast sandwiches. I wasn't quite able to keep up with the Fixie Gang, but still managed to cruise past some overdressed, overequipped and overweight wannabe racing bicyclists with my heavy touring bike. One of the perks of having over 9000 km in my legs ☺. We finished off in the Wabi bike shop to admire some great bikes. We ended up doing just over 80 km that day. LA really has a great bicycling sub-culture that seems to me to be becoming more and more mainstream

Mo 4.1.2016, day 176. Waiting for spare parts!

We were actually planning to head out to continue our trip up the coast. But I was still waiting for a box full of bike stuff I ordered from Chain Reaction. A two-hour expedition to the US post office ended without success, but at least it seemed as if the packet was somewhere in the post office... So we decided to put off our departure for one more day hoping the packet would still turn up. The bad thing about this hiccup was that the next day's weather was supposed to be miserable. On the upside, it gave me the opportunity to take another yoga session with Tim. The session turned out to be brutal and left me with aching muscles, but once again convinced me that yoga is definitively something I should take up. The other upside was that we got to spend one more night with Tim and Megan, and got to enjoy a spinach pie, a great pasta gratin and some fantastic freshly baked bread!

Tu 5.1.2016, day 177. A very very wet start towards new adventures!

The morning didn't start well, in fact it was a carbon copy of the day before. Off to the post office, waiting in line for 1 h, explaining the situation to the poor girl, waiting 15 min as she looks for the parcel, getting told it was not there, giving her an earful, but again leaving empty handed.

It was now really raining hard. But nevertheless we decided to pack up and head off. So we said good bye and biked off through the pouring rain. It was actually quite exciting as there were real deep wild rivers of water flowing off the roads. We got down to Santa Monica where we took a break in the shelter of a café. We got on the internet and to our astonishment learnt that the post office had found the package! What a story!! Now the question was how to go and collect it... We decided to head out to Malibu and worry about the package the next day.

By now the rain had stopped and the sun came out and we had quite a nice ride along the beach. The PCH was quite unpleasant to ride due to mud, water puddles and lots of traffic. When we arrived at Sandro's place (an friend of mine from high school days who went into Showbiz and lived in London and LA ever since leaving school) in Malibu at 7pm as arranged, we were still quite soaked and cold to the bone. We said hello and met Jan, the lady who owned this fantastic beach house, and were put up in a nice room right above the crashing waves of the Pacific. Before too long we were luxuriating in a delicious hot tub, followed by a wade in the stormy sea, a hot shower on the beach and a large portion of chocolate therapy ice cream. Absolutely fantastic!!





We 6.1.2016, day 178. A quiet day in a Malibu beach house.

Sandro gave us a loan of his car to go and pick up the package from Tim's place. I was quite thrilled when I saw his car: a sleek black Audi S5 with a V8 engine. I don't think I have ever driven such a powerful car! I got in, pushed the big "START" button and the engine growled into life. It was really fun driving, even if I was scared not to make a scratch or dent. I didn't even have the nerve to test the "sport" mode. After a successful package salvation expedition, we were soon back and got invited out to a greek place for lunch by Jan. The weather was not looking too good and the beach hut was simply too nice to justify biking out into the rain, so we stayed one more night, had one more great Jacuzzi, one more walk along the beach, some more ice cream, looked at some incredible pictures of Jan during the time she was working as a bikini model and best of all we got to meet Sandro's son, Ocean, a fantastic kid! And we also got to spend one more night listening to the waves crashing on the beach right outside our window.







Th 7.1.2016, day 179. Finally, on the road!

We packed up our bikes, said good bye to Sandro and Jan and once again we were on the road, but this time with destination unknown. It really felt good to be on the road again and also the bike felt very good after the upgrade. The frame bag is great, giving me quick access to small stuff to put on and take off again if it gets cold / warm / wet and also the improvised stand I made using a cheap hiking stick works very well. Also the trailer is less of a nuisance now that the weight and volume has been reduced by getting rid of the Ukulele and packing other stuff away in my paniers. I now actually also have space in the paniers for one of the wetsuits, this will make the trailer even lighter.

The ride was OK, a bit of head wind and also riding up the coast from South to North we are of course on the side of the road away from the ocean. But this is no tragedy. The surf was really high and it was really impressive to see the waves crashing on the beaches. We also saw a couple of top class surfers doing their stuff.

We soon arrived at Leo Carillo State Park, where we pitched our tent on a nice spot under a huge tree. We had a small evening walk along the beach admiring the waves and then watching the sun go down. After a large pot of spaghetti, I spent some time cleaning and fixing the bikes, mounted a new front tire, cleaned and oiled our chains, fixed a slow puncture I had on the trailer, cursed that the new Schwalbe tire I bought for the trailer didn't fit, adjusted Siria's brakes that were rubbing quite considerably (no wonder she is so fit!!), tensioned my chain and generally checked everything was as it should be.











Fr 8.1.2016, day 180. Another night on the veranda of a restaurant.

We slept quite late, got up, spent much time packing, had some granola for breakfast and headed off. I wasn't feeling too good. I seem to be coming down with a cold, with head ache, sore throat and blocked nose. But nothing really serious. We stopped first at a display of US missiles and fighter planes close to Point Mugu Naval Base and had the last of Tim's bread on the beach for lunch. We then went to the Sandbox Café in Ventura where we had arranged to spend the night on their veranda through Warm Showers. We went in to organize everything, had a coffee and some scones and learned that a Mexican couple were going to grill tacos 'till 9pm on the veranda of the café, so dinner was organized! Then we went to do laundry and returned to the café. The Mexicans were indeed there, we were the only customers and we got chatting. In the end we had lots and lots of great tacos, in the end we also got some for free. Then finally we pitched our tent and went to bed. It was really really noisy, with the highway on one side and the main street on the other, but we have gotten used to sleeping in noisy places, so it was a fine night all in all.









Sa 9.1.2016, day 181. Nice chats with a fellow Geologist

After packing up the tent we went for a nice long sit in the Sandbox café. I got chatting to a guy who started asking all the usual questions. He was so impressed that we had biked all the way from Switzerland, that he invited us for coffee, bagels and everything else we were eating! So after several bagels we headed off for an easy and short ride up the coast. We got to the state beach at Carpinteria quite early and found one other touring bicyclist already there. He had a nice Surley bike equipped with Rohloff. We soon got chatting to the guy and it turns out he was a Geologist who had had a University career, but then about 5 years ago, he simply didn't return to work after a sabbatical. Since then he has been hiking and biking all over the country. He has hiked 18'000 miles and biked about twice that. It was really fascinating talking to him. There really are all sorts of life plans and to me the plan that most people seem to choose, i.e. work 9 to 5, house, car, TV, dog, kids and 2 weeks' holiday on the beach every year seems to be quite a waste of opportunities!



Su 10.1.2016, day 182. Unexpected invitation to yoga and a place to spend the night!

We were planning to ride to Santa Barbara, do a bit of sightseeing and then ride on to the next state beach at Refugio. We got as far as Santa Barbara, had a nice stroll out onto the pier, had a nice chat with some elderly locals, headed up to the center of town, stopped for some coffee (like every day really) and finally headed off towards the camping. Siria then started chatting to a couple who were biking homewards. After chatting a bit, they invited us round to join them for a yoga class and if we liked, to spend the night at their place. Turns out Doug was an eye surgeon and Nina an ophthalmologist. They were quite well off and lived in a huge place. They were having a yoga teacher coming round to their place and also had some friends over to join in the class. Doug also took us off onto the golf course in his golf cart to meet up with two of his friends who had just come back from holidays in Switzerland. Turns out one of the two was the owner of the burger chain "The Habit" and had quite a remarkable life's story: He and his brother lost their parents in a plane crash when they were 16 or thereabouts. He worked as an oyster diver and sent all his money to his brother who had a hamburger joint. He was then lost at sea and was found swimming ashore after being lost for 3 days. Finally, the burger joint turned into a chain with 270 restaurants and was floated on the stock exchange making them both super rich. What an American Dream story!

In the evening we were invited out to the burger place and we then ended up back in the house in the TV room on huge reclining seats in front of an equally huge TV screen watching "Arrow" with their son Blake.

What luxury! What an experience!!







Mo 11.1.2016, day 183. Ride up the coast to El Capitan State beach

We got up just slightly too late to say good bye to Doug and Blake. We had some eggs and coffee for breakfast and Nina made some great ginger scones. We then said our good-byes and headed off up the coast. It was quite a short ride. We were planning to stay at Refugio beach as several people had told us that it was a great place. When we got on the bike path between El Capitan and Refugio beach we found that the road was closed, so we had to turn round and go about 2 km back and continue on the highway. Then when we reached Refugio we were informed that the camping was closed due to storm damage. We were also told that the bike path was not really closed. We were quite pissed off, especially as the camping at Refugio seemed very much open, only the hike and bike sites down at the coast had a bit of rubble on them. They could have easily let us stay somewhere else... We were also pissed off that the bike path had signs saying closed, when it was really open.

Anyway, on the up side, the camping at El Capitan was great with a beautiful view of the sun setting out over the ocean.











Tu 12.1.2016, day 184. Very very steep but beautiful hill ride and great camping!

We set off quite early expecting a tough ride. The ride really was tough! We took Refugio Road that headed away from the coast over a 500m hill. The road was steep as hell but very rewarding. Beautiful views and wonderful vegetation. It was funny seeing that the brown barren hills were developing a bright green fluff. Quite amazing how once there is a bit of rain, little plants explode into life seemingly from nowhere. The ride down the other side of the mountain was even more adventurous than the ride up. The road was not paved and the rain had washed deep gullies into the dirt road and at some places there were deep brown lake size pools of water on the road. I'm quite sure I am the first touring biker who went over that hill dragging a kite surf board!

We soon arrived in Solvang, a Disney World like impression of what Americans think a Danish village looks like. We had some pancakes, did the obligatory souvenir photo of one of the windmills and headed off to the camping.

The Flying Flag Camping in Buellton was absolutely top class and very much worth the 25\$ we paid. There was an excellent hot tub that we made extensive use of, brand new showers and toilets, a great common room and best of all, a very stylish propane fire in a big pit filled with glass shards. After cooking some brown rice with a trilogy of courgettes we installed ourselves in the armchairs around the fireplace and soon got chatting to an elderly couple from BC, who both seem to have had a good booze before coming out. But they had some interesting stories to tell of their lives as teachers in the outbacks of Canada, going to work in water planes, spending some years on a sailboat and now travelling round in a small VW Camper van. Afterwards we got talking to another guy with a Golden Retriever who was a computer programmer and working out of his trailer. Working out of home or some other place other than an office seems quite a trend in the US and an interesting development... It was also funny to see the relationship of many Americans with their dogs. Their whole life revolves round the dog. In this case this guys fixation to his dog seemed almost pathological. How can rescue dogs and caring for dogs and getting dogs off the streets, etc... have such a high priority and no-one cares about all the homeless people?? Very strange....



