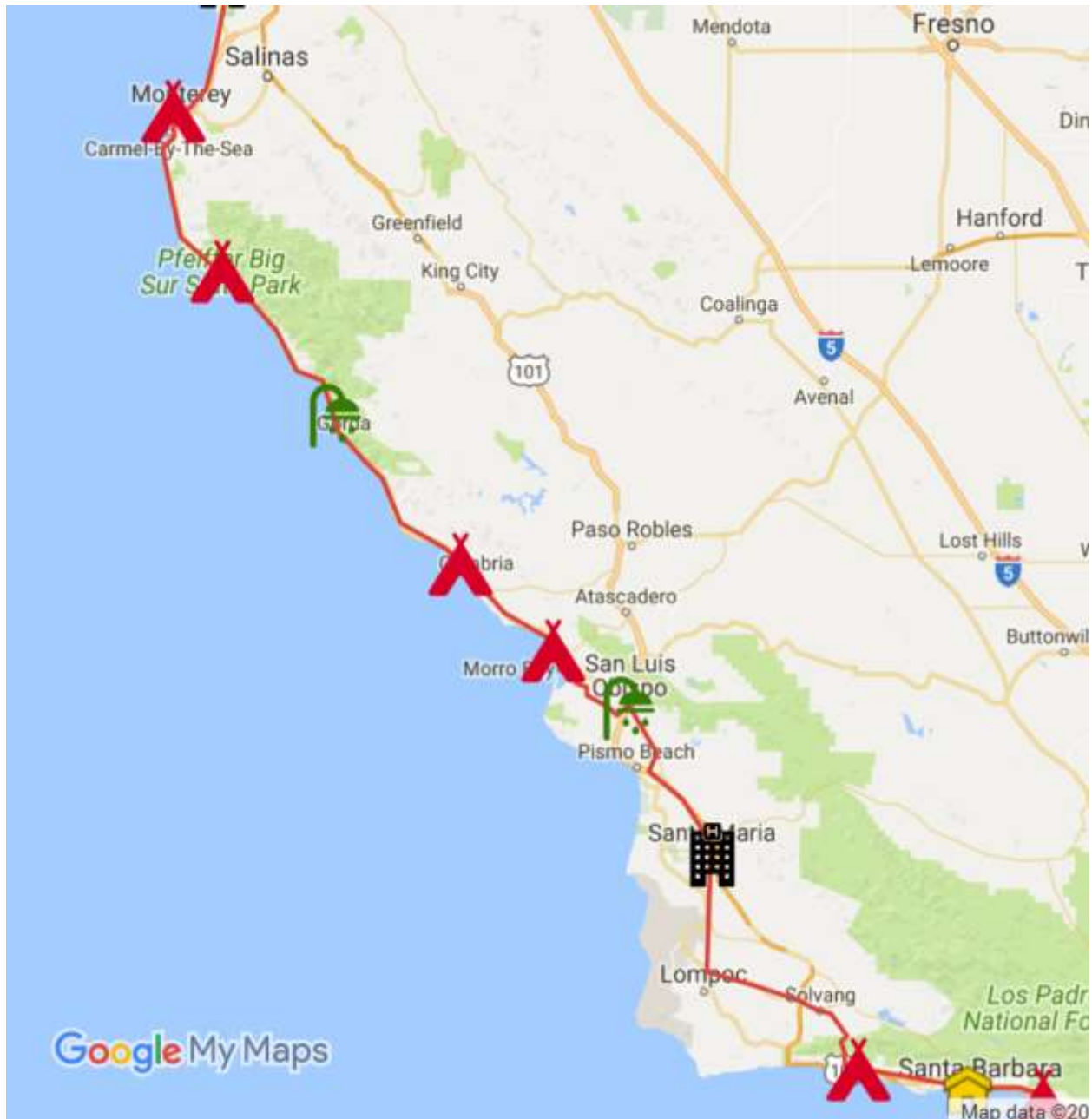


## Season 5 – Part 2. Into Big Sur



We 13.1.2016, day 185. ½ Year on the road!! And a party with some Swiss friends.

We had a great breakfast of oats, yoghurt and fruits, that we had in the common room of the camping. This really was a great camping place! The bike ride was nothing much to write home about, but what is noteworthy, is that we did the 52km without stopping in 2:50 averaging over 18 km/h in spite of 2 quite steep hills. Again, I think it is really cool how fit we have become!

We got to the Travel Lodge hotel, I went over to the Best Buy to see about buying a new camera while Siria went for a soak in the hot tub. I was surprised to find her still soaking when I got back an hour later.

In the evening we met up with some Swiss friends, the Bringolds, who were travelling from San Francisco to LA after a holiday in Tahiti. They invited us out to some great steaks. It was a real feast, with beer, wine and the whole shebang!

Th 14.1.2016, day 186. Staying at “The Establishment” in San Luis Obispo

We were both feeling quite battered and hung over from the night before. We are definitively not used to drinking alcohol anymore! The breakfast in the Travel Lodge was the typical chain hotel affair. Some terrible chewy bagels that don’t improve even after toasting, some premade waffle mix and some brown brew that is labeled “coffee”. We biked the first 35km along quite busy roads through farm land, then we stopped for a nice long break, coffee and cakes. The last part of the ride was really beautiful, through hilly countryside with huge Eucalyptus trees growing along the road.

We had arranged to camp in the yard of a place called “The Establishment” in San Luis Obispo through Warm Showers. This place is a community of 19 people living together in an old hotel. The place reminded me very much of the place I lived with 7 others during my time at the ETH in Zurich and once again I realized what a good idea it is to live together with others. Especially if everyone there is making the conscious decision to live in this way, rather than just doing so out of necessity. It’s so inspiring and stimulating living with other people from other walks of life, there are so many things going on and so much can be learnt from each other. The people at the Establishment were great to talk to and quickly the discussions turned to permaculture. Again!! For dinner we went down to the farmer’s market that happened to be on that night. Highlight for me was a guy that had converted what looked like a meat truck into his music studio. The side opened up, he had speakers and a huge screen projecting himself playing the piano. Apparently he was touring all over the USA in his truck and living off the donations. What a lifestyle!





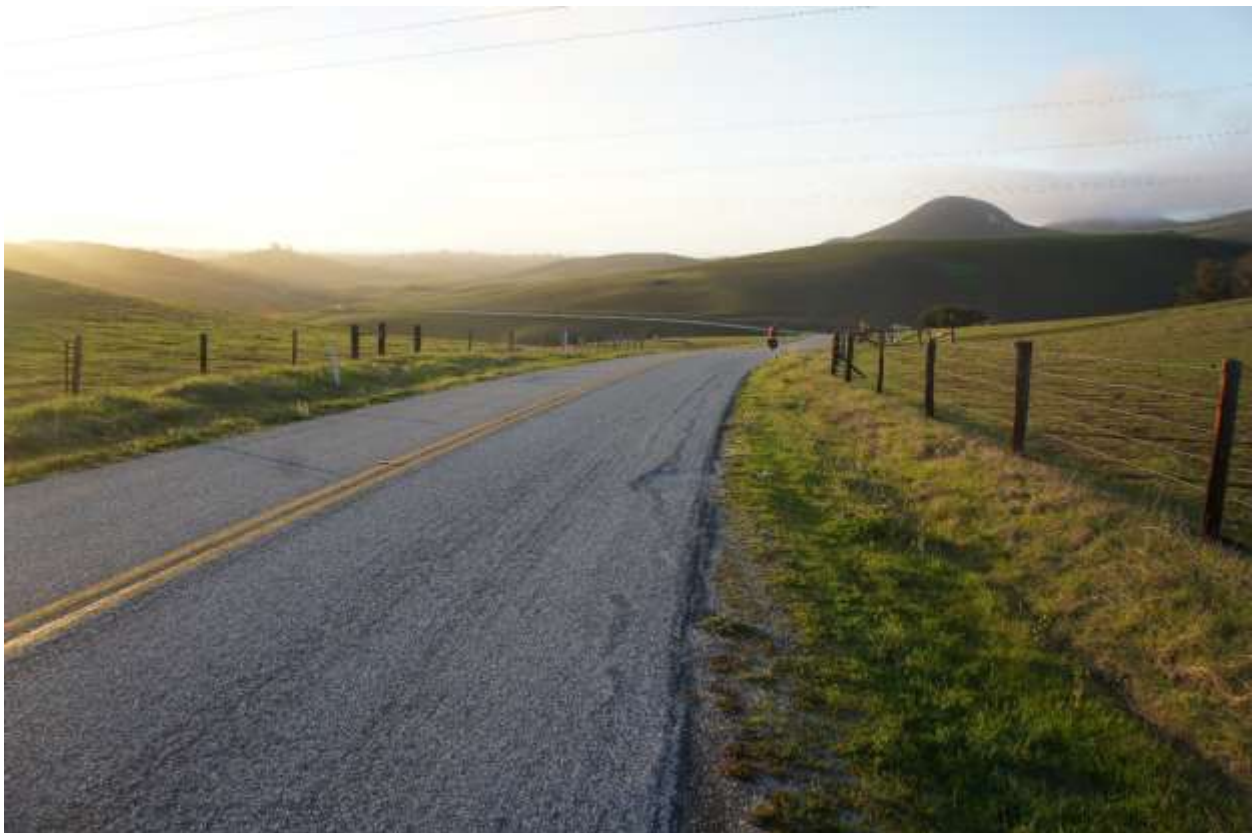


Fr 15.1.2016, day 187. A very long discussion on our further plan.

We got up after a rainy night and enjoyed some coffee and the company of the establishment. We then headed for a place that was well known for its breakfast. There we somehow got talking about what route we should take on our continued journey. Should we head up north of San Francisco towards Vancouver? Should we fly out of San Francisco? Where to? The problem is that there are an infinite number of possibilities and also that it is not possible to do everything. But what should we leave out?

It was already long past midday when we finally decided to continue the discussion some other time and to finally hit the road. Our ride for the day was only a short 30km down to Morro Bay. On the way, while celebrating our 9000<sup>th</sup> km with the obligatory selfie, we got talking to an Austrian guy called Karl. He showed us a wonderful little side road to take. We met him again about an hour later, again when we were stopped for some reason. It was already dark when we arrived at the camp site. We cooked a very nice vegetable soup and afterwards went for an evening stroll along the moonlight coast into the village. To our surprise we found some shops and restaurants that were still open and even a place to have some frozen ice cream.





Sa 16.1.2016, day 188. A nice ride out of civilization...

We had a great muesli breakfast and headed off quite early. We stopped for about an hour for coffee and then biked northwards along the coast. Just as we did a short stop to peel off some clothes Karl came biking along. He laughed at us because every time when he saw us we were stopped by the side of the road! We arranged to stop in Cambria to have some coffee and cake together. We got to the state park in good time, pitched our tent and went for a walk along the beach. It was absolutely spectacular with huge waves rolling in. The waves were a bit too big for Siria and she got caught by one that drenched her soaking wet right up to her knees.























Su 17.1.2016, day 189. A day in Cambria.

We decided to spend two nights at the state park so we could visit the sights. It had rained a bit during the night and in the morning there was a thick fog. Everything was soaking wet making getting up quite unpleasant. What made things worse was that all the showers and flush toilets in the park were closed due to water shortage. After breakfast we headed up the coast to the visitor center of Hearst Castle. However we decided not to take the tour, thinking that 25\$ pp was a bit over budget. We then split up and I rode up to have a look at the Elephant Seals. It was unbelievable to see them all lying there, most of the females with little black screaming cubs. The noise and the smell and the infinite little fights and displays and drama going on was incredible. I could have stayed and watched for hours. After a nice tour to a lighthouse I headed back and met up with Siria for Hamburgers. The weather was not really very hospitable, so we went back down to Cambria and settled down in the warmth and dryness of a café on main street. As it started to get dark we headed back to the campsite. One other biker had arrived. We didn't get to talk to him right away, but we were to bump into him again and again in the following days. We had a very healthy meal of vegetables and cottage cheese that we finished just as it started raining again. So we crawled off to bed early and listened to the raindrops drumming on the tent.















Mo 18.1.2015, day 190. Another fantastic Warm Shower experience!

It rained heavily all night and the weather forecast predicted more rain during the day. So we were already mentally getting prepared for a wet unpleasant 60km bike ride of the coast to Plasket, where we had organized a Warm Shower. However, when we got up, we were pleasantly surprised that patches of blue were poking through the thick fog that was clinging to the trees and hills. We had a great Müesli breakfast and by the time we had packed everything up, the sun was out and we rode off in brilliant sun shine. The ride up the coast was absolutely gorgeous with spectacular views of waves crashing on black cliffs and small sandy coves on one side of the road and steep mountains with lush green vegetation on the other side. We stopped for a quick coffee at Ragged Point where we met a very nice couple, he was a Geologist and she used to work for the national parks. Funny how that is already the second Geologist we meet! We also met the mysterious lone biker that had shared the camping the day before. It was Stone. We got chatting while I was having a coffee. He was riding from Alabama to Monterey, and was, let's say, travelling on a restricted budget and his name also had quite a lot to do with his other occupation apart from biking. I offered him a coffee and he was very grateful. We left at the same time and we were surprise at the speed he shot off at. However we soon passed him as he was sitting on a rock having a smoke. He then overtook us again and again we passed him while he was having another smoke. This game went on for a number of times. It was quite funny.

The only bad news of the day was that I broke two spokes. Good thing I got 6 reserve spokes in Pittsburgh, but in San Francisco I really must get a whole lot of spare spokes considering the rate at which they are breaking... Also I was quite pleased with how well I can true the wheel using my improvised zip tie truing stand. In 10 minutes I had both spokes replaced and the wheel was almost as straight as new. To celebrate I adjusted the back brakes and found that the pads are almost completely gone (again!) and I also cleaned and tightened the chain and realized that also the chain is stretched way out of tolerance (again!).

We arrived at Murdock's place at 17:30 sharp, as he had asked for. It was a very nice evening indeed! He has hosted almost 100 guests in a bit more than one year and he always has the same procedure: spaghetti for dinner and waffles with ice cream for breakfast. It was really inspiring listening to some of the trips that his guest were on. There really is no limit to what can be done on a bike. There were people on tandems, with trailers, young people, people in their 70ties, Asians, Americans, Europeans, on long trips short *trips*, fast trips, slow trips. Really quite amazing!

Also Murdock quite obviously is a huge 49er fan (Football team from San Francisco). Absolutely amazing the amount of fan merchandize he has collected! We felt almost like we were sleeping in a temple dedicated to the holy 49ers!

I really do hope that he one day takes some time off and takes to the road so he can see what it is like being on the receiving end of the Warm Shower community and sees how much he is doing for all of us touring bicyclists out on the road in the wind and the rain and the cold.

















Tu 19.1.2016, day 191. Another very wet day.

We got up at about 5:30 to some coffee and some fantastic waffles with maple syrup and ice cream! It was pouring rain and Murdock let us stay at his place while he had to go to work. So we used the opportunity to catch up on blogging, did a wash and laundry and watched the rain pouring down outside...

The forecast said there should be some breaks in the rain, so when there seemed to be a break at around 10am we left. We hadn't gone far when it came pouring down again. Soon we were absolutely drenched. We decided to only go as far as Kirk Creek Campground, about 10 miles. There was not much by way of shelter there, we tried as best we could to stay out of the deluge under the small overhang of the roof of the toilet. It became apparent that the rain was not going to be stopping anytime soon, so we pitched the tent, trying to keep the inside as dry as possible, inflated our mats, put on some dry clothes, cooked a nice soup in the vestibule. Soon it was very cozy and after lunch we snuggled into the warm sleeping bags and had a wonderful long nap. It stopped raining before sunset and we went for a nice hike down to the seaside and watched the waves pound the rocky shore.







We 20.1.2016, day 192. Up into Big Sur.

The ride along the coast certainly does justice to its reputation. The scenery is splendid! We stopped from time to time to admire the views together with hordes of tourists mostly driving Ford Mustang rentals. I can hardly imagine what it is like in summer! The ride was not as tough as I thought it would be. Sure there was a bit of up and down, but nowhere near as much as I had expected. We also started bumping into Stone again. The other amazing encounter we had was with Callum, a young guy who was biking around the world and had just come over the the USA from Asia. He was obviously having the time of his life. We had no idea that he had lost his brother to cancer and was riding for charity. Quite amazing stuff: <http://challenge360.org/>.

Just before we got to Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park I broke another spoke. While fixing it we got talking to some Mexicans who turned out to be importers of organic fruit in Arizona and were here for a large organic food conference. They gave us a huge bunch of organic mini-bananas and invited us to join them in the bungalow they were renting in Monterey and also to maybe join the conference. How cool!

We arrived at Big Sur in good time, had some great but very expensive treats in the Bis Sur Bakery. The camping is quite amazing with huge redwoods. I went running right after we arrived and went all the way a trail called Buzzard's Roost. It was about 5 km with 300 m altitude up and again I was amazed at how fit I have become. By the time I was on my way back it was completely dark and I missed a turn and found myself in the middle of the pitch black forest with no idea where the right trail back was. Maybe not so smart...











