



The Flyin' Solo VanLife on the Highways and Byways of North America

**RICK'S ROADS**

Ride Along and Enjoy the People, Places, and Who Knows What



BLOG POST: 2022.09.07

Pacific Coast Highway, CA – Day 1, Monterrey



California State Highway 1 (CA-1) from Murro Bay north to Monterrey is an amazing road. At 656 miles, it is the longest state road in California. For some stretches, it runs concurrent with US-101 (for example, over the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco). The Big Sur section from San Luis Obispo to Carmel is an official National Scenic Byway.

The first section, between Ventura and Santa Barbara, was opened in 1913. The road was completed piecemeal after that and was finally fully constructed up to highway standards and given its official CA-1 designation in 1964.

I've driven it a few times before, and, in 2006, I got a perfect weather day for a boatload of beautiful photos when I went north-to-south. [See the full photo album here: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/kVckTAYcG6oNr5DZ6>]

Heading south makes the most sense since you are in the lane closest to the ocean, so when you get the impulse to pull over for a pic stop – which happened a **lot** -- you don't have to worry about zooming across oncoming traffic.

Despite the title of this post, it is not about the scenic wonders of CA-1. There were, though, a few noteworthy roadside views between San Francisco and Monterrey.











The woman in the lower left corner of the above photo got a surprise. She was dressed quite fashionably, in a colorful, flowing dress that barely showed her shoes. The ocean breeze was swishing it and swirling it as she posed and posed, laughing and grinning for her friend with an expensive camera.

I'd have believed it to be a modeling shoot except for the photographer's fundamental mistake of having the sun behind her subject.

This went on for a few minutes. They had been on the beach, but had ventured out on that large, flat, stage-like rock shelf to make better use of the 100-foot-tall boulder behind them. She strutted about like she was on a Parisian runway. It was funny to watch.

Then it got *really* funny. Little waves had been rolling in and lightly splashing up against the edge of the shelf. But then came the rogue. I noticed it because it created a big splash and spray against the monster rock. Uh-ohhh...

A few feet higher than the others, it swept right on in and swallowed the front of the stage. That curb cut its momentum, but a foot-high swell plowed onward and washed right across the stage and halfway up the legs of our model. The photog saw it

at the last second and dashed for high ground, but Susie Supermodel there had no clue and got *swamped*.

She kept her feet somehow, but her swishing dress was now a soaked rag clinging to her legs. From up here, I couldn't see her face, but her body language was about one second of icy shock, one second of rage, then a flood of total laughter. It was great.

Oh, one thing I forgot to mention about yesterday. When I stopped for provisions at Safeway – on *Labor Day*, mind you – the store was completely done up in Christmas decorations. I shit you not.



So I spent three days in Monterey. It's a cool city, but I can't tell you much about it because I didn't do a damn thing in it.

I rented a hotel room at the Stargazer Inn & Suites, primarily so I could use the Wi-Fi to upload the thousand-plus photos that I had taken in the last few weeks. A few hundred still had to be edited (or at least tweaked). Then they needed to be funneled into their own galleries and loaded onto Rix Pix on SmugMug.

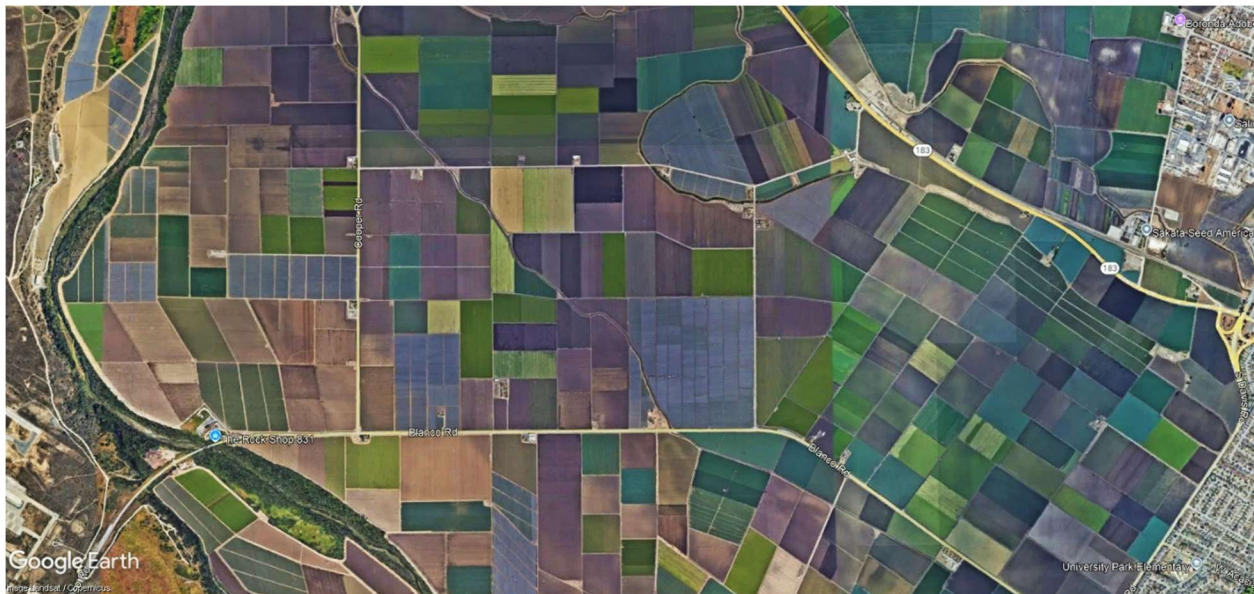
I also had a new reefer to acquire. Vevor sent it to a UPS store in the nearby (18 miles) city of Salinas, so I went there to pick it up. I laughed when I saw it. It did not match the photo on their website at all, but I was 100% fine with that. It was an *exact* copy of Alpi, now-defunct Alpicool fridge/freezer. Totally identical, no instructions needed, no learning curve required. I bumped the two of them together to pass the road-love from old-to-new, and welcomed Vevo to the party.

I also have to tell you about the ride to Salinas. The first half was uneventful, but then I turned left onto Blanco Road, passing a sign that I thought said Del Monte Farms

(I might have been wrong about that). For the next five or so miles, both sides of the road were fertile fields full of crops of various colors and heights. And *hundreds* of workers!

At some fields, a half-dozen cars were parked on the shoulder of the road and two dozen people with long sleeves and wide-brimmed straw hats were out among the crops, bent to the task of picking.

At other fields, I could see a school bus parked way out there and close to fifty workers gathering the fruits or veggies. A couple of times there were *two* busses.



My odd little mind was rolling around in several streams of thought. The Joad family, in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* swam in one of the streams.

A couple of others streams busied themselves with the bare business calculus of labor cost, plus packing, plus transportation to market, versus the cost of the product and the net income; how many *thousands* of cans of peas, or green beans, or peaches, or carrots, or pineapples, or -- well, you get the point – do you have to sell to just break even?? This was mega-farming.

[By the way, if this farm was affiliated with Del Monte, that company earns \$1.73 *billion* annually in the USA. And, I was sad to learn, in 2015 they were purchased by a company in the Philippines].

The Stargazer was OK. Not great, but OK. Not expensive, and you get what you pay for. It did have an indoor pool that was pretty nice. I'd stay there again, if that means anything. Does that count as an endorsement?





One pain in the ass thing about it – and this is not the hotel’s fault, for sure – was the alarm. Ugh.

Some jamoke parked an old Chevy pickup truck – dirty, tan-colored, rusty, with a cheap-ass cap covering the back – right next to Blue Maxx. I mean, like 11” away, and on the side with the slider door. He had backed in and had left himself plenty of room to swing his driver’s door out wide, which meant he was over the line on my side. [Good thing I had a slider, because the swing-out doors on all my prior vans would not have been usable.]



So, yeah, that’s inconsiderate enough; the spaces were not narrow. But then he turned on his alarm. What it was that he had to protect in that shitbox is beyond me. In fact, no thief would have looked twice at that Chevy, but once the alarm went off, a thief worth his salt would be thinking, “heyyyyy, chief must have sumthin’ goood in thar.”

So, close OK, alarm OK, whatever makes you sleep better, dude. ***But***, this was one of those alarms that went off the moment *anything* touched the vehicle. And he must have had the sensitivity cranked up full. I was out and back to Maxx several times, needing to grab this or that to bring into the room, and if I so much as brushed my hip against the fender, that alarm blared.

Annd, to top all of that off, he and I were parked in front of the walkway that led between two sections of the hotel. Annd, he backed in far enough that his left rear bumper was an inch from the fence, so nobody could get by on the wide side. That meant that everybody had to squeeze between BM and his box-o-shit to get to the walkway. And, in such a narrow space, bumpings and brushing are going to happen.

That alarm was going off several times per hour. My room was less than 100 feet away (I know because I was running my yellow cord out to Maxx to charge my SGs), so I heard it loud and clear. Each time, the *whoop-whooping* lasted about five minutes till it shut off, but dammmmmmn, early morning, all afternoon, all evening, *WTF, dude?????*

So, yeah, that sucked. Serves me right for getting a hotel room, I suppose.

