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

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Second Beach, Teahwhit Head, Olympic National Park, Washington



The Pacific Coast is amazing. Steep cliffs and huge sea stacks define it. Many beaches look similar, but they have their differences. And they all look great.

The Atlantic Coast has its beautiful areas – the rocky coast of northern Maine, the towering dunes of Cape Cod National Seashore, and the serene barrier islands of North Carolina's Outer Banks, for example – but most of it is privately or commercially owned, and we can't enjoy without it paying for the privelege.

Most state parks here do charge a modest fee -- often just for parking fee -- but that's the extent of the money grab. The boardwalked beaches of Southern California, with surf shops and snack shacks do not typify this coast as much as these rocky, cold water, public recreation areas do.

From San Francisco to Canada, almost all of the shoreline is government land: state parks/beaches, wildlife sanctuaries, or National Parks. Condo developments and towering hotels are rare. On A1A in Miami, by contrast, that's all you'd see, totally blocking out anything more than a glimpse of the ocean. (That's Miami, not South Beach, which is a clear exception.)



It was two-hour drive from Ruby Beach to Second Beach – the middle beach in a series, sitting between the cleverly-named First Beach and Third Beach. It was pretty late in the afternoon, so I was not expecting primo photo ops. The forest above the shoreline would be illuminated, but those impressive sea stacks would all be backlit. They would still look pretty cool (above), but nowhere near as cool as they'd look with morning sun shining on their east-facing flanks (following pages).

So, I knew tomorrow morning's return would be my best shots, but I still clicked a lot of pics this afternoon. Partly because I often enjoy a scene more when I can frame it, and partly because tomorrow might dawn foggy and this whole beach could be hidden under a thick gray marine layer. If the AM views did get fogged out, at least I'd have these shots in hand.

But, in the morning, I got there ahead of the fog (barely), and it was spectacular.











But I was not there long before things began to change. The gray bank that had been sitting timidly offshore had begun to creep closer. And an eerie, ethereal mist began to waft outward from the forest.





At first, I walked around the beach at a stroll pace, drinking it all in. But when the fog began its invasion, I hastened to get my perceived best photo angles before they got swallowed (see pages 3-6). Once I had those in the bank, though, I really started to dig the fog. It came from the sea, from the woods, and even up from the beach itself.







I had been on the beach for less than half-an-hour, and the scene had gone from all-clear to fogged-in. It was quite a sight to observe.





But it also signaled to me that it was time to move on. Inland, there would be no fog, and it would be a beautiful sunny day to check out a famous rain forest.





Orange, purple and pink starfish cling a beach rock at low tide.
High tide would find them comfortably under water.